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* Freshman writing.

FLAME

by Bill Bridget

Little Oren, at age five, took the magnifying glass that his mother used to read, went out to the back porch and began frying ants. He built a five inch high pyre of cindered black Hymenoptera and ate them. His mother gave him a whipping with a newspaper.

When he was six years old, Oren climbed into the back seat of the family car and lit a box of kitchen matches. The garage burned down, and his father beat him with the buckle end of a cowhide belt.

A year later he burned up Mommy and Daddy, and the homes of six neighbors, when he put a lighted candle into the oven and turned the gas on to see how long it would take for the stove to go "Pop!"

Oren went to live with his grandparents in Phoenix. Grandpa Molotov was an austere patriarch, a hard-core Baptist. The basic element of this family creed Oren was able to assimilate, directly out of experience: water puts out fire. Thus, there was conspicuously little friction between members of the household.

As he grew, the new passions burning within him centered themselves around Oren's cousin Bernice. She was a fetching wood nymph of a child, with brown-amber eyes and flaming red hair . . . a little firebrand of twelve, just one year his junior. Though Oren was inept and untried, his ardor was matched at last by her desires. Haltingly, fumblingly, they sought their consummation. At last, in a hay loft, they enacted their final moment of childhood, the age old ritual. But when Oren tried to set her panatella afire, he set his paramour's hair ablaze.

Volunteers followed the bitter-sweet odor of combustion to find Oren standing in her ashes, performing her final absolution with his disconsolate tears, making mud on his shoes which he scraped off and kept in a jar in his room. When the winds came out of the desert night, blowing sand and other trash, he often would press his face against the attic window and, with a soft cry, remark "That's Bernice, all over."

With his first love's tragic return to dust, Oren's will to go on likewise flickered and waned. Filled with acid remorse, he fervently longed in his consummate bitterness to have his own life snuffed-out.

But, as a life is not easily extinguished, gradually Oren's immersion in his studies, in spite of his insulating himself from social relationships, crumbled armor tempered with regrets.

He had a flair for the sciences. Brilliant insights in the ordinarily dull routine of Chemistry I and II, that were not designed merely to be flashy, were the product of zealous attention to the disciplines and a methodical fusion with the elements of laboratory technique. Yet a characteristic hesitation in Oren against showing off skills which could have enlightened his peers caused more than one professor to flare-up and remonstrate him not to "conceal his light. . . ."

Predictably, the emotional bombardment penetrated the unshielded nucleus of his personality, accelerating Oren's naturally active imagination and undampened enthusiasm. . . .

The inevitable did occur: a device incorporating a modification of the principle referred to as the "Solar-Phoenix" fried that city as effectively as would the mid-day sun a broken, raw egg upon the literally-burning desert sands.

The Phoenix does not always arise from its pyre renewed.

What news, then, of the young trailblazer? It was not in his stars for Oren Molotov to be consigned to the eternal inferno. Stranger fates yet awaited him, a new dawn.

It is in the nature of any explosion that all forces are directed outward. It was in Oren's nature to be at the center of things. He came down no more than a mile off shore, a bit put-out but otherwise unharmed, at a place called Fire Island.

all come undone

by jeff devens

pledge your troth to none but you
conceive of all that you can do
for no one else can live your dreams
or imagine how you'll sew the seams
across envisioned moonlit night
of sky's orange eye, the pristine kite
that flies at dawn before you wake
and all that day is yours to take
to bed with you on satin pillows
of self-induced ecstatic billows
creating a phantasmic fright
forcing you to rise in flight
to another land never old
where trees stand tall and grass grows bold
as the ambition that you once possessed
and no one there will ever guess
you've lost yourself in prison hallways
remaining there and waiting always
for the jailer with the magic key
to come someday and set you free
but don't you know the lock is on the inside?



JACK MARDIN, 12 YEARS OLD

by Robert Peirce

"New York, 14, 12—hike!"

Jack Mardin took two steps toward his opponent, cut sharply to the right, and was running upfield in the clear. His long legs, well developed for his age, easily outdistanced the opposition.

"Here, Benny, here!" he shouted frantically over his right shoulder.

The worn, leather football arced uncertainly from Benny Butler's fingertips, wobbled in midflight, and fell harmlessly short.

"Gol-l-l-y, Benny," Jack scolded after he had joined his four teammates in the huddle. "I was wide open. Can't ya ever throw a ball right?"

Benny Butler spit at the ground and wiped his face with his torn, sweaty T-shirt. "Man, they were all over me."

"Ya gotta run outta the pocket," Jack insisted. "Let me run the next play."

The players agreed. They knew he was the best quarterback Livingston's seventh grade class had produced since Reed Mardin.

"Terry, Jimmy--ya guys take six steps an' crisscross. Benny, ya lay back an' block."

"New York, 12, 18, 14. . ." Jack Mardin eyed the defender expertly. Larry Pierce, the pudgy redhead covering Terry, was slow. Terry could beat him easily.

"Hike—!" The ball flip-flopped back into Jack's hands. He gripped the smooth leather tightly with his right hand, and stepped back quickly, as he has seen his brother do many times. Ronnie Duncan was rushing in. Jack waited to the last possible moment, and then, copying his brother's well-known style, cut to the left suddenly, leaving Ronnie Duncan sprawled on the sunburned-yellow grass. Terry had left Larry Pierce safely behind him and was streaking for Mr. Lipkins' backyard.

Jack set his right foot and let the ball roll smoothly from his fingertips. The projectile cut through the air perfectly and settled neatly in Terry's outstretched arms.

"Nice pass, Jack," Terry bubbled as he ran back with the ball.

Jack Mardin grinned with satisfaction, and wiped his sweaty right hand on the back pocket of his faded bluejeans. Reed would have been proud.

"Jackie," a high-pitched, hoarse voice belonging to a stout, middle-aged woman two doors down interrupted the game. "Jackie, comere and wash up. Your brother will be home in an hour."

"OK, Mom," Jack answered, with a trace of excitement in his voice. "I gotta go, guys. Reed's comin' home today."

"Hey, you 'spose he'd throw us some passes this afternoon?" Benny asked.

Jack flushed with pride. "Maybe," he allowed. "We'll see what we got planned."

"When'd he get back from Vietnam?" Larry Pierce inquired, still puffing from his futile chase after Terry.

"Bout a month ago. He was wounded over there," Jack had become very good at telling this story. It still gave him a twinge of pride. "He caught a shrap-in-el," he repeated the word as he had heard it from his parents, "in the arm."

"Wow!" the boys breathed their admiration together.

"Did he get hurt bad?" Benny asked seriously.

"Naw, Dad said he'd be all right. He was in the hospital for awhile. Listen, I'll ask him if he'll throw us some this afternoon."

"Yeah," Larry agreed. "Maybe we can get Billy Jackson to play to even out the sides."

"I ain't seen him in a week," Benny observed.

Jack frowned. "He's nothing but a bookworm. He can't play football worth a shit."

"Seems like all he ever does is read," Terry offered.

"Who cares? We'll just play one short," Jack decided. "That's better than havin' Billy screw things up."

The other boys followed Jack's lead the way they always did. "Yeah," Benny added, "Billy'd probably just get in the way."

Nearly cooked roast pork smells greeted Jack Mardin at the sliding screen door that led into the Mardin gameroom. As he entered he heard his Mom rummaging through the silverware drawer in the adjoining diningroom. Tonight Jack knew there would be the "good" silverware, china plates with pictures of purple flowers on them, and dainty glasses you had to refill many times during the meal. Tonight was special. Reed was coming home.

"Hi, Mom."

"Hurry up, Jackie," Mrs. Mardin turned to greet her youngest son as he walked into the diningroom. She must have been very pretty once. Now two childbirths had rounded out her figure and her

once very dark hair was greying. 'I don't ever want my children to get grey hair,' she had once joked. True to her word, both sons had very blond hair and deep blue eyes. "Reed and Daddy will be home anytime now."

"OK," Jack turned to go. Then, as an afterthought, "What time are we goin' to eat tonight?"

"Oh, about six."

"Good. Reed can throw the guys some passes before dinner."

The cheerful, calm smile that made Jack feel warm inside left his Mother's face, and the expression that replaced it made him uncomfortably chilly.

"Whatsa matter?"

She turned quickly to the silverware drawer, and scooped out some utensils. "Nothing . . . except we'll all have a lot to talk about." But her voice sounded strange and it left Jack troubled.

By the time a cold, brisk shower had washed off a morning's football, and Jack had dried himself, the feeling of dread had left him. He dressed quickly, feeling much like he did at kickoff time against Gainsburgh Junior High last fall, or when they had announced the first string all-state quarterback two years ago—Reed Mardin. Jack put his dirty undershorts in the clothes hamper by Reed's stereo. He settled back on his carelessly made bed across the room from Reed's neatly-made bed with its tightly drawn bedspread. He tried leafing through an autobiography of Y. A. Tittle, which he had borrowed from the school library, but he couldn't concentrate. Restlessly, he wandered over to his mahogany desk, and picked up the heavy, brown scrapbook that was lying on top.

In it were newspaper accounts of Reed Mardin's high school football career. Jack knew almost every article by heart, but he still liked to gaze at the black, bold headlines, which proclaimed such miracles as, "Reed Sets Brimington School Record; Sophomore Whiz Throws, Runs In 5 TD's,;" "Reed Connects For 3 TD's; Aces Still Undefeated," and so on right to the last article telling readers that Brimington's star had decided to enlist in the Marines rather than go to college.

That was two years ago, and now Reed was coming home. Discharged because of a 'shrap-in-el' wound. Then, like a lurking panther, Jack's mother's face sprung out at him again, and the way she looked a half hour ago turned his blood icy. Jack had seen that expression only once before, when his grandfather had died.

("Nothing, except we'll all have a lot to talk about.")

There had been a phone call the night before, and his parents had whispered in the kitchen following it. Somewhere in the back of Jack's mind, a voice was telling him something. But he turned on Reed's stereo to drown it out.

"Do you want somebody to love. . ." the stereo pounded.

A car pulled up in the driveway. The backdoor opened. Voices. "Oh, Reed, oh God, it's good to have you back."

Jack sprang from his bed, slid around the corner and ran into the livingroom.

"Reed. . ." Jack stopped cold, frozen in disbelief, his jaws working but no words coming out.

There stood Reed Mardin, all-state quarterback, the pride of Brimington High. Six-feet-two, blond hair, blue eyes, 195 pounds, a little less since the Marines.

The room swayed, and Jack could do nothing to keep it still. Inside, his heart was bursting, his stomach retching. He struggled to close his mouth, to act cheerful, and not to look at the empty right sleeve of Reed's dress uniform, which was folded in the middle and pinned neatly at the shoulder.

"Hi, Jackie!" Reed said, and he smiled uncertainly, leaving his only arm wrapped around his Mother. "How have you been?"

Jack's mother, like the face of doom, stared at her youngest son. His father studied the picture on the livingroom wall.

Then Jack knew he couldn't stand there. He wanted to, but he couldn't.

Tears blinded his vision, and more came as fast as he could wipe the others away. He didn't remember turning and running to his room. Or pounding his fist on the mahogany desk until his knuckles bled and blood ran on his bedspread. There was only anger, and dismay, and finally sorrow. And he couldn't stop crying.

Far away, the creaking of bedsprings across the room filtered through Jack's aching emotions.

"They should have told you," Reed Mardin began, and he got uneasily to his feet and walked over to the scrap book still lying open on the mahogany desk. He fingered a page absentmindedly, and then turned to his brother.

"They should have told you, but I only called them last night."

Jack tried to speak, but he couldn't yet. His throat felt swollen, and it burned so that no words would come out.

"I didn't want to worry them. When the doctors told me I would lose this," he tugged on his empty right sleeve, "I told them to let me tell the folks. I didn't want to worry them."

There was an uneasy silence. The tears had drained from Jack's eyes, and he regarded his brother selfconsciously, keeping his eyes off the empty sleeve. Someone he didn't remember had once told him it wasn't polite to stare at crippled people. So Jack couldn't bring his eyes to face his brother directly.

"I got this at Hue," Reed said, and the words came too quickly. He bent down to examine the autobiography of Y. A. Tittle, which had been tossed on the floor.

"Wha . . what's a shrap-in-el?" Jack sputtered, trying to keep his voice steady.

"It's a piece of exploding shell. They come whistling at you and you hit the dirt and then if you're lucky you can get up again. One hit the officers headquarters. I was lucky."

Then Jack had an idea. "Reed, can't you learn to throw a football left handed?"

The answer came with such agitation, forced by such anger, that Jack actually felt frightened.

"You don't understand, Jackie. And I don't know if I can tell you so that you will." Reed sat down on the bed next to his brother. Jack saw him relax again.

"Jackie, you remember the offers I got from those colleges?"

His brother nodded.

"Why do you think I never accepted any of them? Why do you think I went to the Marines instead?"

Why? Jack realized suddenly that he had never considered why. He had accepted the fact that his brother was going to the Marines, much as he had accepted the 90-yard pass his brother had thrown to Bobby Jackson his senior year. It was just something that happened. Why? Jack felt uneasy and he didn't know why.

"When I graduated I felt. . . You remember Dad telling us how to drive the boat at Lake Tammany? You remember, he said always pick a point on the shoreline where you're heading. He said that way you would never go off course. Remember?"

Vaguely Jack did. He had been very young at the time.

"When I graduated I felt like I didn't have a point on the shoreline. I felt like my life had no direction. I panicked, and joined the Marines."

Jack tried very hard to understand what his brother was saying. It sounded important, though he couldn't tell himself why.

Reed laughed a very dry laugh and lit a cigarette. Jack didn't remember that his brother smoked. "Well, I can't say that I know now where I'm going. But I know there is more to be gained than the fans' applause. There is more to be lost than fifteen yards for offensive clipping."

Jack was feeling very uneasy now, and that little voice in the back of his brain was again trying to tell him something. His brother's intense stare was making the voice louder.

"You remember Toby Jackson? He joined the Marines three months after I did. You probably know his brother, Billy."

Jack knew Billy, the bookworm, and he remembered Toby. Toby Jackson played end on the Brimington state championship team. Reed and Toby hung around a lot together in high school.

"Toby died over there last week. His outfit was ambushed. Only four made it out alive. I'm sorry they didn't tell you about me, Jackie. It was cruel. But you've got to try to understand."

Reed got up and headed toward the door. "I'm going over to see the Jacksons. Probably see you for dinner?" And he was gone.

The voice in the back of Jack's brain was throbbing now, demanding to be heard. Jack walked over to the stereo, flipped the record, and waited for the drumbeat to silence the voice. Toby Jackson, Jack remembered him. And Billy—

"I gotta girl she loves me tru-u . . dah, dah, du, dah, dah. . ."

the stereo pounded.

And then the voice broke through. Jack whirled, slid around the corner, and pumped full speed to the front door, where Reed and his folks were standing.

"Reed! Reed!"

Jack Mardin felt something he could not understand. But he knew somehow it was important, and he needed to understand. "Reed," he looked his brother in the eye, "I'm going with you."

the projectionist

adrian ford

insomnia
after nightmare
mouth dry
small of my back
magnetized to the mattress
I lie in bed
against the cool wall opposite the door
I stare at my black space of door
there is a light on outside
opposite the door
in the hall of this hotel
in this city I have never been to
this evening I had nothing else to do
I went by myself to see a movie
in the projected beam
desires drifted in and out
like particles of dust
as I watched
outside on the cool street
headlights of cars glided through
mist off the cliffs of the sea
a sill of light
shines under my door
am I alone left in this city?
is the door locked?

Blue Balloons

Greg Shelton

Characters:

Mama

Papa

Mr. Jennings, Neighbor.

Deacon Jennings,

Mr. Jennings, Shop Supervisor

(A very middle class living room. Preparations are being made for a 4th of July party. As the curtain rises, Papa is on stage surrounded by dozens of blue balloons.

PAPA: Blue Balloons! (Kicks the balloons) Damn blue balloons! (Kicks them more frantically) Couldn't be red balloons like last time, but goddam blue balloons. (Kicks them even more frantically.)

MAMA: (Entering carrying a turkish waterpipe which she is smoking. Sits down, puffs on pipe, and watches Father) Did you say something, papa?

PAPA: I hate blue balloons! Dammit! Why don't we have red balloons like last time?

MAMA: You didn't like the advertising on the red balloons, dear.

PAPA: Yeah, well, I'd rather have the red balloons with advertising, than these stupid, dull, depressing blue balloons! I hate blue balloons.

MAMA: Well, hang them up anyway, dear. The guests will be here at any time.

PAPA: What are you going to feed the guests? [he exits]

MAMA: Apple pie.

PAPA: (Off stage) With or with out an upper crust. I hate an upper crust.

MAMA: The guests like it, dear. They always do.

PAPA: I hate, hate, hate it! (Papa reenters carrying a paint can and large brush. He sits on the middle of the living room floor and begins to paint the balloons red.)

MAMA: (Screams) What do you think you're doing? (Pause) You're going to get paint inside your finger nails and never be able to get it out before the guests get here. Besides, you had better put the flag up dear. We should have a flag at a 4th of July party.

PAPA: (With dull resignation) Yes, mama. (Exits again)

MAMA: I hope you're not too disappointed about the apple pie. But like Franklin used to say, you can't have your cake and eat it too.

PAPA: (Re-enters with American Flag which he hangs upside down) Platitudes, platitudes! Your conversation is full of trivia, did you know that!

MAMA: Stupid! Look how you're putting up the flag. Stupid, stupid. The field goes on the LEFT!

PAPA: (Turns flag around so that the blue is on the left, but the flag is still upside down) I just wish you could listen to yourself sometime. You use so many cliches that it makes me sick. Physically ill. Just like these damn blue balloons and your stupid, doughy apple pie.

MAMA: Try to calm yourself, papa, before all the guests arrive.

PAPA: Yeah, well at the shop party, we had red balloons. We had white ones, too. I took my cigarette and popped all their blue balloons. (laughs loudly) Jesus, I hate blue balloons!

(Doorbell rings)

MAMA: Our guests are arriving.

PAPA: Or it could be a telegram.

MAMA: Or a special delivery.

PAPA: Or a fire chief.

MAMA: Or the gestapo.

PAPA: Or (He opens the door) Our guests (disappointed)

MR. JENNINGS: Ah, good evening.

PAPA: Yes, and a happy 4th of July. Did you have trouble finding our house?

MR. JENNINGS: No, I live right here in the neighborhood, remember?

PAPA: Oh, yes.

MR. JENNINGS: As a matter of fact, I live right next door.

PAPA: Oh, yes. Say, mama. It's our neighbor, Mr. Jennings. He's come to our party.

MAMA: Hello, neighbor Jennings. Won't you come in.

MR. JENNINGS: (Brushes off snow) Yes, well, thanks.

PAPA: Unusual weather we're having.

MR. JENNINGS: Yes, quite. What kind of food do you have?

MAMA: Apple pie.

MR. JENNINGS: With or without an upper crust?

MAMA: With.

MR. JENNINGS: (Screws up his face) Oh. (Pause) But I see you have blue balloons. I remember the last party when you had red balloons with "Murphy's" printed on them. Did you get them free?

MAMA: The blue one, or the red ones with advertising?

MR. JENNINGS: The red ones.

MAMA: I don't remember.

MR. JENNINGS: Well, then, the blue ones.

MAMA: I don't remember.

MR. JENNINGS: Well, I don't suppose its too important.

MAMA: No.

PAPA: (Back to painting the balloons) I heard this fine joke at the office the other day.

MAMA: But you don't work at an office, dear.

PAPA: Well, maybe our son told it to me.

MAMA: We don't have any children.

PAPA: Dammit! I heard a joke! (Scowls at Mama) It seems there was this window washer who fell from a tall building and landed on his jaw. He was taken to the hospital and this awful cast was put over his whole face so he couldn't eat.

MAMA: Did they feed him intravenously?

PAPA: No, they couldn't. Well, after three days he began to get pretty damn hungry, so he called for the nurse. "Nurse, nurse, I'm hungry," says he. "I gotta have something to eat!" Well, the nurse went to get him some hot chocolate to pump it in through his anus.

But as she pumped it in, he screamed, "NURSE, NURSE!" Then the nurse says, "What's a matter, is it too hot?" "No," says he, "It's too damn sweet!" (laughs broadly)

MR. JENNINGS: (Does not smile) That's a very nice joke. I told it to you at our last party.

PAPA: Oh.

MR. JENNINGS: (sipping tea that was on the table) I would like to stay and chat for a while, but I have much more important things to do. Will you get my things? (Although Mr. Jennings entered bare headed, Papa gives Mr. Jennings a hat. He still has on his coat.)

PAPA: Well, it really doesn't make any difference. We have other guests coming, you know.

MR. JENNINGS: Charming party. So sorry I have to rush off. Ta Ta. (He exits)

MAMA: I just love Mr. Jennings. He's so witty. He really knows how to tell a joke.

PAPA: Yes. Witty. (Starts to paint the balloons again. One breaks, but he paints it anyway, then hangs it up.)

(The doorbell rings.)

PAPA: More goddam guests.

MAMA: Or bill collectors.

PAPA: Or the service man.

MAMA: Or neighborhood pranksters.

PAPA: Or the garbage man.

MAMA: Or (opens door) Deacon Jennings! So glad to see you.

JENNINGS: (Same man as before, dressed exactly the same) The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away.

MAMA: Oh. What a wise, wise man! Papa, it's Deacon Jennings, here to bring us the word on this night of nights.

PAPA: Good evening, Deacon. (Hangs up a large crucifix. The cross is painted a striped red, white, blue)

JENNINGS: A very blessed and good evening to you, my brother.

MAMA: Would you like some tea? (Offers same cup as Mr. Jennings had)

JENNINGS: A most generous gesture.

MAMA: And some apple pie?

JENNINGS: (Meekly) Does it have an upper crust?

MAMA: Yes.

JENNINGS: No, thank you. The Lord hath not given me facilities to digest great quantities of dough. The Lord giveth and the Lord

taketh away.

MAMA: (in awe) How beautiful!

PAPA: Say, Deacon, would you like to hear a fine story that Mama just told me?

MAMA: (embarrassed) Papa.

JENNINGS: I should be ever so delighted.

PAPA: Well, once there was a window washer, a good, Christian man. But one day he profaned the Lord, and the lord saw fit to let him fall from a building and land on his good Christian jaw. He was taken to a good Christian hospital where a good Christian nurse cared for him until he was again in the Lord's blessing, then he was released into God's Good Christian world!

JENNINGS: (laughs hardily) You really know how to tell a story! It is a gift from God.

PAPA: Aw.

JENNINGS: Well, the Lord God tells me through my bladder that it's time for me to use your facilities, if I may.

MAMA: Why, of course, Deacon. They are just through the door and to the left. (Deacon Jennings exists to the bathroom)

JENNINGS: The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away!

MAMA: Ah, what a man of wit and insight!

PAPA: And he likes good jokes!

MAMA: It's a real shame that all people can't be like that. (The door bell rings.)

MAMA: More guests.

PAPA: It seems we have to be charming for a while longer, mama. (opens door) Why, Mama, it's my boss! (Hangs up dollar sign painted red, white, blue)

(Mr. Jennings again enters, dressed the same)

JENNINGS: So nice of you to invite me to your petty little party in your crummy little house.

MAMA: W-won't you come in, sir. T-tea?

JENNINGS: Canadian Club.

MAMA: (Hands him the same cup as others) W-weather we're having.

JENNINGS: Yes, weather.

PAPA: How do you like our humble little house, sir?

JENNINGS: Pretty good considering your crummy wages. (Looks around.) Blue balloons. My favorite! Some ass popped all the blue balloons at the shop party. I'd kill the sonovabitch if I found

out who it was.

PAPA: What a horrid thing to do! But you know me. I was just remarking to Mama here how much I like blue balloons.

Mama here how much I like blue balloons.

MAMA: You'll never really know how fond he is of blue balloons!

JENNINGS: Blue balloons. (wistfully) God, I wish I could find out who it was. He'd be fired so fast. . .

MAMA: Er. How about some nice apple pie? It has an upper crust, but I can cut it off if you want.

JENNINGS: I like the upper crust.

MAMA: (Mumbles) Upper crust for the upper crust.

PAPA: Mr. Jennings, sir. I heard a funny story on T.V. last night.

JENNINGS: So. . .

PAPA: Well, I though I might relate it to you.

JENNINGS: Well, I won't like it.

PAPA: It's about a window washer who collected blue balloons.

JENNINGS: Not interested.

PAPA: Oh. (meekly)

MAMA: Your pie, Mr. Jennings, sir.

JENNINGS: It looks moldy. I'm getting sick of your stupid, bourgeois party anyway. I've got to go home and look at my bank book, and my check book, and my stock certificates, and my lovely bonds, and all the loose change around the house. Goodby. Nice party for people in your circumstances.

PAPA: I'm awfully sorry, your highness.

JENNINGS: Its not your fault. It's socio-economic differences. Don't dwell on it, man.

MAMA: Well, we are truly sorry.

PAPA: Sorry.

MAMA: Extremely.

PAPA: Sorry.

MAMA: Forever.

PAPA: Sorry.

MAMA: Sorry.

PAPA: Sorry.

JENNINGS: Well, I won't hold this against you at the shop. You can depend on me. (He exits)

PAPA: (sighs)

MAMA: (sighs)

PAPA: Nice party this year.

MAMA: Much better than last year's.
PAPA: Much.
MAMA: Yes, much.
PAPA: Well, I suppose we should put away the decorations.
MAMA: Use two boxes dear. One for the balloons, and one for the air.
PAPA: A fine idea.
MAMA: Yes, if you put them together, the air will just ruin the balloons.
PAPA: Ruin.
MAMA: Just ruin.
PAPA: Stain, too.
MAMA: Rust.
PAPA: Corrode.
MAMA: Ruin.
PAPA: Just ruin.
PAPA: (all of a sudden excitedly) What about Deacon Jennings?
MAMA: Is he still in the . . . ?
PAPA: I had better go see. (rushes out)
MAMA: (Sits smoking her water pipe.)
PAPA: (re-enters) He's gone! All gone. I think he flushed himself down.
MAMA: Damn. We'll have to call a plumber to get it unstopped.
(Curtain)

These few stifled feelings

Vicki Kessinger

These few stifled feelings for you by morning
I'll ferret out
and the warm coursing of them will congeal
to silver-thinned strands wound in the chambers
of my soul.
And you'll ask me how and look at the blood morning sky
dissipated to grey iron threads . . .
by then I should be up the staircase.

He's Not Heavy

by Kit Porter

He often hears a rippling brook
That I don't even know is near,
He often hears a waterfall
That I can't even hear.

He sometimes smells wild flowers,
That I don't even see,
And he can run in clover fields
Almost fast as me.

You should see how good he swims,
In our old water hole,
And he can throw a baseball
As far as I can throw.

So often in our playtime,
As through the fields we trod,
He makes me feel so happy,
As he smiles and talks of God.

Oh no, sir, he's not heavy,
Though I tote him all the time.
And gladly so I do it,
For my little brother's blind.

A Disgusting Exploitation

by Peter Tamulonis

If you have never seen a Seminole Indian reservation, consider yourself lucky. I have, and believe me, it was a truly unsavory experience. This is what happened.

Driving down the Tami-Ami Road, on the outskirts of the Florida Everglades, I approached a sign which read, "Seminole Reservation—Next Left." I had never seen a reservation of any sort. Since I thought that this might be a unique opportunity to learn a little more about my American heritage and about the unconquerable race with which Florida is still technically at war, I turned in. As I parked my car, I noticed that I was surrounded by a fleet of Cadillacs with unusual license plates. Upon closer inspection, I discovered that the Cadillacs were owned by these so-called poor, underprivileged Seminoles. The strange license plates merely indicated that the owners were Seminoles and were thus entitled to purchase anything they desired, including gasoline, food and clothing, completely free of any form of tax. These people are not even required to file income tax. Now, I really had to know how they lived. After paying the ridiculously high price of seventy-five cents, I prepared to enter the village.

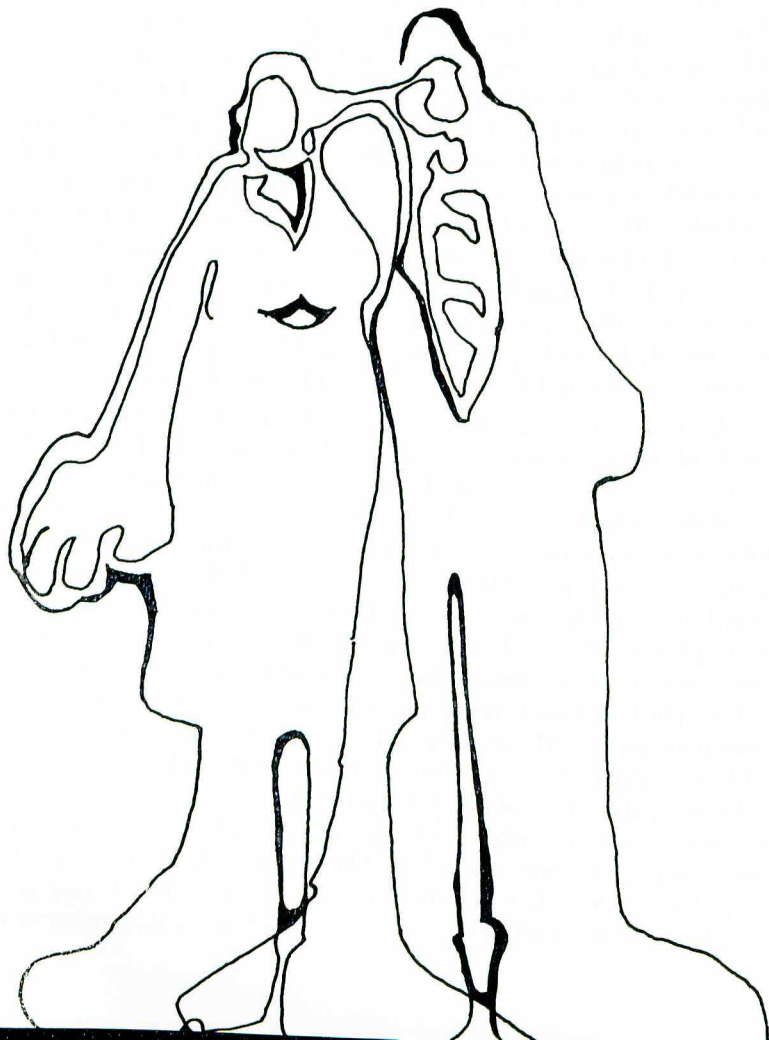
As soon as I was within the enclosure, I detected the foul stench of rotting plants and mildewed clothing. As I approached the center of the compound, I surveyed the expressionless faces of the adult Seminoles as they lazily watched a band of grubby Indian children scurry around the dirt-ridden camp. The villagers seemed apathetic toward the dilapidated condition of the reservation and toward the wretched appearance of their unkempt children. Struck by inspiration, I decided to photograph this unique element of Americana. I soon learned that the inhabitants were eager to be photographed. A small group of villagers rapidly assembled for an impromptu picture. However, as I began to focus my camera, all the children in the portrait extended their arms, and while clenching and unclenching their fists, shouted, "Money! Money!" Even a tiny babe, still too young to walk, cried out while nestled in its mother's brawny arms, "Gimme! Gimme!" After paying the bribe, I finally snapped the picture. But why did I take the picture? Did I want as a keepsake this picture of unwashed Indian children, clothed in tattered

and dishevelled attire, posing before an unordered array of shabby huts?

The reservation was closing. All the tourists were asked to leave.

I got into my car. However, before I drove away, I watched with disbelief as the Indians, their day's work completed, filed out of their reservation, entered their respective Cadillacs, and drove home—to their comfortable, two-television homes.

I do not disapprove of anyone attempting to make a living, but to coldly exploit one's children, one's ancestry, and one's ethnic culture merely to "make a buck" is not only disillusioning, but also disgusting.



Pater Noster

by Bill Bridget

“I left the door unlocked, Bill.”
the note read,
“And I laid a change o’ clothes out for you
on the bed.
The grocery order came, lad,
and I put the coffee on;
Fix yourself a meal and don’t wait up
——I won’t be home for supper,
not tonight, son.
“There’ll be a man by in the morning,”
he went on.
“I know I can depend on you
to get it done:
Your dad is getting on, it’s plain;
and as a man gets older,
One day his strength is gone
and the burden of the days
too many to remember
too much to shoulder.
You gave me strength,
to think that you had failed *me*.
That could not be true.
If you could have been a better son
I don’t know how,
’cause I’ve never stopped being proud
of you . . .
“And though I’ve gone away, I want your promise
not to worry’ bout me, lad.
I’ll be in the barn.
Come and cut me down.
Your dad.”

Fred

by Edward L. Williams, III

Fred is a real great guy. He has everything going for him. Just yesterday as I was walking down to the pool room, I passed two elderly ladies and overheard them talking, or gossiping, whichever way you look at it. They were remarking, "Did you know Fred is going to State next fall?" That's what they were talking about. You see, Fred is a straight "A" student at Central. He's sort of what you'd dream about if you were a teacher or a professor. I actually think some of the old lady teachers really dream of him sometimes. It wouldn't suprise me, the way they are always talking about him. Around Central High, he's just about everything. I mean, if you were going to build a statue and put it in the lobby for freshman to come and say, looking up, "If I could be anyone here, I'd want to be like Fred Andrews." Then you would make that statue, like I said, of Fred. It sounds a little ridiculous, but a lot of things in high school do. Take for instance, National Honor Society. It's a good organization, for the members. It's good for the members if they need it. It doesn't do anyone any good, though, but set the scholar apart from the crowd so when you see one, you can say like two old ladies, "Fred sure is making something out of his life." Fred's in the Society, President. He's in all the school clubs. To put it short, he's received so many accolades that he's almost a legend. And do you know why? Like I said, the reason it was all made possible is because some professor gave him an "A". You see, if you get below a "C" average, you're out of school activities. That means no athletics, no clubs or no food halls, because in short . . . you're a trouble maker.

Now, meeting Fred has sure been a factor in this life I'm living, but we don't get along. He seems to think, you know, why bother? Who am I? Well, it wouldn't be so bad, but the thing that's too much to take is that because his I.Q. is about 140, he believes he's really got it made. Like, what else is there in life? Yesterday, when I was waiting my turn at pool, I was thinking. Everyone is measured, dressed, and labeled according to how fast and often he finds the square root of two complex numbers. Then I started thinking how Hitler had a way of categorizing people too. Super soldiers got to carry guns and murder their inferiors. Remember the "Super Race"? And the more I thought, this whole affair of labeling people started unfolding like a map before me. Even in Russia, what grade you make

as an adolescent actually lines you up for your life work. You could be a doctor or a peasant, all at the time you're still in your teens. Now, I imagine, to make things more orderly, everything in life could have a test and a label to it. Say with God, you had to pass a test to see what part of heaven you got to sit in. Gabriel, just like professor Watkins, would watch to make sure no one cheated.

It sure is funny what a grade will do for you. Look at Fred. He's a real great guy. But who says so, really? This is what really is odd—only the people like Fred. Right. Now, it's not too difficult to see once you get the idea. The righteous are judging the righteous, so to speak. The intellect says it's good to be smart, but only the intellect. He's got his own set of standards, like Hitler. He says the average guy is a stumbling block, but his opinion comes only from him. He doesn't look through anyone else's eyes but his own. It seems to me that you'd have to be pretty careful not to have a biased opinion, like that. And then, isn't everyone going around looking through his own eyes? What's in a grade? Just what has Fred got? He's gone and solved life's riddle.

I lined up the eight ball and thought about my teacher. She had asked once, "Why don't you use your potential and succeed?" She wanted me to be like Fred. Then with a crash, I sent the ball screaming into the pocket, taking a full ten dollars from Harry. Damn! he groaned, how do you do it? You look through your own eyes and line it up, I thought.

The Allegory of the Maze

by Cynthia Jared

Every member of the animal kingdom has a hunger drive, a need for food. This need excites the organism and compels it to search for food. The creature will explore his environment and investigate novel stimuli to find the variety of food that is necessary to satisfy this drive. Theoretically the intensity of this need may be reduced, but it can never be fully satiated, nor can it be extinguished. The organism is equipped genetically with the physical capacities and knowledge to satisfy this drive. What happens if the animal fails to respond to this drive, and under what conditions might this happen even when a sufficient amount and variety of food are available?

To answer these questions take one of these hungry creatures, a plump, white rat, which has been isolated for several hours, and place him in a T-maze. Suppose that this creature has been in the labyrinth before and has learned that if he turns right he will be fed. Presume also that this rodent has never before been aware of the alleys on the left. What will the subject do? He will explore the left arm of the maze. Even though he is extremely hungry and knows where to find food, some innate force guides him to the left. He must explore all possible sources before he selects his source of nourishment.

However, suppose an electric grill has been placed by an experimenter just inside the left arm of the maze, which will shock the inquisitive creature when he ventures into this unexplored alley. The rodent will enter the arm, receive the shock, and return to the right arm. This may happen several times, but eventually the creature will control his desire to explore and return to his previous pattern of behavior turning right consistently, never venturing to the left again.

Now the experimenter places the hungry, right-turning rodent in the maze again. At the end of his journey through the maze he finds many brightly colored stars with his food. Perhaps not immediately but eventually, because of the consistent pairing of the two stimuli, the subject will explore the stars, value the stars, work for the stars just as once he explored his food, valued his food, and worked for his food. The behavior that was previously elicited by the food will not be elicited by the stars. Suppose the rodent will receive a greater number of sparkling stars if he runs the maze very quickly. He will then run

as fast as his little rat legs will carry him so that he may win the greater number of the valuable stars.

Now another hungry, right-turning, star-collecting rat is placed at the entrance to the labyrinth with the subject. These two rodents are of the same litter and are accustomed to sharing their mother's milk. Will they assume that there is a sufficient amount of food and number of stars for both, or will each race, bite, scratch, and claw his brother so that he may have the greatest number of stars for himself? The subject is now competitive.

Suppose that the experimenter then erects an obstruction in the passageway. The obstacle is tall so that it will challenge the rodent but short so that he can climb over it. There is a space between the obstruction and the wall. This space is large to allow the plump rat room to squeeze by but small to make slipping by more difficult than climbing over. What will the star-collecting, competitive rat do? He will try to slip by because it appears to be easier than climbing over. The creature realizes that squeezing by is not what is expected of him, but it does not concern him that he has not "earned" the stars. All that interests the subject is the accumulation of the precious stars. He is now a cheating rat.

The creature is next required to make a given number of journeys through the maze, over a required number of obstacles, with his brother rat. He is given food and stars each time he completes a trip. The creature is promised that when he completes the required number of runs and collects the required number of stars that he will receive the largest, shiniest star of all. The subject makes the trips, collecting the stars but ignoring the food. The morsels of grain are of no value to a star-collecting rat. If the pellets are not presented, this creature is not distressed. Food is worthless; stars are important.

Now the star-collecting, competitive, cheating rodent has received the largest, shiniest star. He will accumulate no more stars for running the maze. What will he do then if placed at the entrance to the labyrinth? The animal knows that there are not stars at the end, so he no longer runs the maze. He has long ago forgotten the other arm of the maze. The slim, sad creature has a faint memory that once many thousands of maze-trips ago there was a reason to run the maze. A reason other than stars. But the connection is gone, he can not remember. Even though he is starving, the rodent loiters at the entrance. He runs in circles. He may even venture tentatively into the

maze. Arriving at the goal he finds food, but he does not recognize it, so the animal will return to the entry. He sits down to wait. Wait for what? He does not know, he can't remember. Eventually he will die. Inches away from food he will starve to death, because in his haste to collect stars he has neglected his basic needs and has lost his ability to satisfy them.

Sentimentalism Is What You Would Call This Had I Not
Left Out the Woodpeckers and the Butterflies

by Susan Cox

It was wonderful to be alive.
Today I
picked up a buckeye and one for my
love, peanut-warm
from the last sun of summer
(Or was it the first sun of fall?).
It smelled like hay
the grass, not like chlorophyll
heavy escaping.
Not to be Thoreauish, but there were squirrels too
(just as I expected) scampering
without reason
after mutual tails and entirely
for the fun of it.
I kept the buckeyes to impersonate
still warm
a paranoid's ball-bearings
for a not so warm day.

Billy

by David Head

Geraldine said she couldn't understand her son. She and Charles had awlays been good to the boy, but somehow he had "turned out wrong." His two older brothers, Geraldine said (and she had told Billy countless times) had exactly the same hardships as Billy, but now one was a respectable Certified Public Accountant, while the other was going to get his M.D. degree shortly. And where was Billy? Gone off to Chicago for a year to music conservatory, then completely disappearing for six months, and then suddenly reappearing, with that beard, those ridiculous clothes and a completely insufferable, nasty attitude. "Had he been a problem child all along?" People asked her. "In a way, yes." Billy had always stuttered, she imagined as a result of some birth defect, and it seemed that the only way he could really express himself fluently was in his music. He loved the piano. "But that was where his problem began," she said. "Billy kept wanting to play this modern stuff—'experimental jazz' he called it. Of course we put our foot down, and insisted he stick to the classics, and to respectable composers. He used to get very angry with us and shake his fist, and could hardly speak for stuttering; which was unusual, as he was always so quiet. But he seemed to get over it, finally. We all thought he was going to do well when we sent him off to Chicago to a good, respectable school. But now—his attitude, his clothes, those friends of his! Disgusting! I finally told Charles to tell him to leave and never come back, after Billy had come home that time and literally tore the house to pieces for no reason at all! My beautiful purple drapes, my antique crystal glassware, my new leather lounge chair—all ruined! Well, he's gone now. The last we heard he was in Ohio, working in a factory, and living with a bunch of homosexuals and Negroes and God knows what else! I just can't keep from wondering about him, and what went wrong. He's just not the same Billy we used to know."



the trap

by nancy mason

... how to help a handsome boy
 who never knew
 the hope and joy
of woman's love

... how to show him where to turn
 when soul doth want
 and body yearn
to seek some warmth and comfort

... how to lead him far away
 from older men
 who see and prey
upon his graceful form

... how to show him that I care
 cautiously, so not to scare,
 and save his peace of mind

King of the Vermin

by Norman Blum

He awoke with a start. It was less than a yard from him. Its mouth was open revealing large teeth set in powerful jaws with saliva drooling forth. As it licked its chops with the pleasure of anticipation, a spasm of fear went through him. He grabbed hastily, and his fingers enclosed a handful of sand.

"Ahh!" He shouted in its face and threw the sand in its eyes. It yelped and retreated cowering and snarling in fear. It stopped about a dozen feet away blinking and snarling. Then it looked at him, and its snarl changed into that insane laugh which maddened him so. The fingers of his right hand tightened around the handle of his pistol as he started to lift it, but then he checked himself. He remembered he only had two bullets left, and he must save those for when they would all come in for the kill. The rest of the pack was also startled by this outburst and they all retreated a few feet. They were used to running from the death agonies of mightier animals than themselves, he thought. Some of them were growling, and they would usually end their growling with that laugh. The laugh, it was that insulting laugh that made him hate them and not their odious habits or their terrible stench. Why weren't hyaenas like the vultures who patiently waited for their victims to die and then ate them? Why must they insult their dying prey with that laugh?

He couldn't let himself fall asleep again or it might be all over. He rested his chin on his left hand and held the front of the gun handle with his right while propping the muzzle under his chin and against his wrist. When his left hand fell away, it would make his chin fall on the gun barrel and awaken him. He could see them more clearly now for it was almost morning. They were growing bolder every day. They were sitting around him in a circle, some no more than ten feet away. A few were stretched out getting the sleep that they were denying him. He had forgotten how many days it had been since he had slept. He had forgotten how many days it has been since he and his crew had landed in the desert. He looked up at the hyaenas, and he could begin to make out their hungry faces. He fancied that they had probably developed a taste for human flesh by now. He remembered his copilot and still believed his own decision was right.

They had been hit by a lot of flack over Naples on their last bombing run. The big B-17 had lost an engine, part of its right rudder, part of the tail section, and the radio. Also he had lost two crewmen, the tail gunner and the navigator. Unable to keep up with the rest of their squadron, they lost speed and altitude. They were afraid they might have to ditch it, but he made it over the water and back to north Africa. But using only dead reckoning, they had missed the staging point, and had flown a couple hundred miles into the Sahara desert before they realized their mistake. Although his copilot Frank objected he decided they would have a better chance continuing south rather than turning back north. He reasoned that the plane might quit before they got to the base, and they'd probably never find it anyway, just flying around getting nowhere. It was better to keep flying in a straight line. They might have even seen an oasis or a water hole where they could land. At any rate, if they could find some people, they would help them back to their base. They saw only sand, but they flew much farther than he had anticipated. They flew for hours and they must have covered hundreds of miles. They flew so far that the terrain began to change its appearance. Instead of endless sand, it became almost a scrubland of semi-desert. From this, he concluded that they must be somewhere near the northern edge of the great African savannah. When the plane finally ran out of gas, he allowed the rest of the crew to bail out. He and Frank had stayed with it and brought it in for an almost perfect landing.

All that morning he has assessed the damage to the plane and talked to the radioman about repairing the radio. They decided that the radio was beyond repair, so he concluded that they should head south for the savannah that night. He would never forget what Frank had said when he told him what he planned to do.

"You can't do it. We can get the radio working again."

"I just talked to the radioman this morning, he'd said, and he told me it was beyond repair."

"Jim, come over here and tell the captain what we decided."

"Sir, the receiver's out, but since this morning I looked at it again, and I think we might be able to fix the transmitter in a week or so."

"If you get it to work, he'd snapped, and if they receive it, and if they can spare a plane to get it, it will be two weeks before they get here and by then we'll be dead."

"You can't go across the desert or we'll die sooner," Frank responded.

"You're dismissed, Jim."

"Yes, sir."

"Now listen Frank, we have to be close to the northern edge of the savannah. Even if we don't find a water hole, we'll take our side arms along and shoot game. There's bound to be game out there, gazelle, wild hare, lizards. We'll get along out there."

"You're a damned fool if you take us out through that heat. . . ."

"What did you say, mister?" He could feel the blood rise to his face.

"Begging the captain's pardon, but we'll all die out there. . . Sir."

"I'd rather die out there with a fighting chance than starve in this tin cigar while you risk my life tinkering with that damned gadget. We're heading south tonight, and as long as I'm in command I'll thank you to let me worry about the lives of the men. Do you understand?"

"Yes sir."

"Then start getting ready to travel."

He wondered now if Frank had been right. Oh, surely he'd made the right decision, but what had gone wrong? Why should they have died? Frank's face haunted his mind, and his words still rang in his ears.

It had been worse than he expected on the desert, but he had forced them to go on day after day. Frank had fixed him with his icy stare all the way. He knew Frank thought he was doing the wrong thing, but he had to keep pushing them.

"You can't push us any more. We've all gone as far as we can. We're going to stop here," Frank hissed at him through his teeth.

"We have to keep going. We must be near water. Those vultures and hyaenas have to get water from somewhere near."

"You ass, those vultures and hyaenas are here because we've left three dead men behind us, and they're waiting for us to die next."

"I've had enough of you, mister. When we get back from this, I'm going to have you court martialed. Do you understand me?"

Frank sat down passively and so did the other two, for they were now eager for rest.

"Get up!" He shouted at them.

"What kind of a man are you? Do you like to hurt people? Do you like pain? We could have stayed with the plane, and we'd pro-

bably be saved by now. Do as you wish, captain, we're resting here until tomorrow.

He settled down on the sand and stayed there all that afternoon and evening. When dawn came, the other two were dead. He and Frank had to get as far away from the bodies as possible, so they traveled fast that morning. They had to leave the feeding hyaenas behind.

They were both getting very weak when the pack caught up with them, and Frank was a bit delirious from the sun. The pack moved swiftly to encircle them. They were moving in for the kill. To them, these were two dying animals who couldn't defend themselves. The dumb brutes couldn't know that the small pieces of metal these creatures had in their hands made them more deadly than the fiercest lion. As they started to move in, Frank lost his head and started shooting rapidly. Being excited by Frank's shooting, he too began firing until he was down to three bullets, then he realized what he was doing. Frank had emptied his gun, and now in a wild frenzy he threw it at them and started running after them. He ran after Frank and tried to stop him, but he was too weak to catch him and soon he fell. Frank disappeared over a ridge running and stumbling, then getting up and running again, yelling and screaming all the time. The hyaenas padded after him, their tongues out and saliva dripping. There was no need for him to go and see what was happening. He knew it as though it were taking place before his eyes.

He stayed there a long time with his head between his knees before he moved again. There were about half a dozen dead vermin around there now, and he couldn't stand to be near them. He had only gone a hundred yards when he fell down again and decided to stay there. Before sunset, they returned. It seemed that they had made quick work of Frank. After the darkness settled, they tried for him, but he killed one and set the rest running with another precious bullet. All that night he watched them, and he soon learned that they would flee even a loud yell. They were growing bolder all the time, though he was growing weaker, and his yelling seemed to bother them less and less. He could feel the heat of the morning sun on his back, and he knew it would be a hot day. He remembered the hot sweltering days when he was a kid. He and his friends used to go swimming at the lake in the summer. He used to float on the water. All he had to do was just relax his arms, legs, and head, and let the water hold him up. He could feel his arms and legs and head and even his body relaxing and

floating in the water right now.

He jerked his head up quickly to avoid the sharp pain he felt beneath his chin. The iron sight on the barrel of the gun had cut him below his chin when his head fell. He didn't know how long he had dozed before his hand and head had fallen, but the circle had drawn closer and tighter since the last time he remembered seeing them. He shouted and threw sand at them again. They growled and retreated a few feet but soon sat down again. What cowards they were; he thought. They had jaws and teeth more powerful than a lion's, and yet a pack of them were frightened by the yelling of a dying man. Some of the vultures were still circling over him, but most had taken their places behind the hyaenas to wait for whatever was left to them. He had to find some way to keep his mind awake and busy, so he started creating fantasies. He tried to create fantasies of home, but his mind was too exhausted and the heat too great for his brain to think of anything that abstract. He looked around for something to think about, the sand, the scrubs, or the water on the horizon. No, he mustn't think of the mirage. Then it was that his eyes fell on them, the two rows of scavengers with the hyaenas in front and the vultures in back.

He kept his mind busy by arranging the order of nobility of the vermin, with the vilest of them being the greater nobility and the less repulsive being the lesser nobility. Rats would only be knights in this order. Flies and maggots could be counts and barons. The vultures were only dukes and earls, but the king of them all was the hyaena. He had never seen or smelled a creature so filthy and vile in all his life. His hatred for them was a driving force in him now. He looked into the sky at the circling vultures. Some more of them were joining the waiting group, and they were coming from the southeast.

He had noticed that this seemed to be their direction of origin before. He had decided that they must go there to roost, and if they roosted there, there must be trees in that direction. Where there were trees, there was water. There must be water there, if he could only get to it. He had to get to it. He struggled and made it to his feet. He fell, but fought back up to his feet again. He took a few steps and fell. He looked toward the southeast. There, there it was! It was all over the horizon. It was just a few hundred feet from him. Water, all the water he could drink. He struggled toward it falling and staggering. Finally, try as he would, there came a time when he could no longer stand, and he sank down unable to move. He lay there exhausted and breathing heavily. His tongue was so swollen that he could no longer keep it in

his mouth. What a fool he had been to chase the mirage. He must have been delirious. As if it were life itself, his hand had instinctively clung to the gun. He thanked God for that, for they were closing in on him now.

He tried to focus his eyes on them, but he couldn't. He couldn't raise the gun for long, let alone hold it steady. Perhaps he could just pull the trigger and frighten them away. Just then he was vaguely aware of the noise of the vulture's wings as they all took flight. The hyaenas stopped and listened and then they too fled. He did not know what was happening. A short time later he heard a rumbling noise. He could make out the dust, but what was it? A man, no, men were coming, and they were on horseback! He was saved! They would take him back now, and away from these hideous vermin.

They arrived and dismounted around him. One of them picked up his gun and said something in a strange tongue to the others. Then he felt them tugging and pulling off his boots, and one was slipping his arms out of the sleeves of his shirt. He tried to yell, but his throat was too parched and his tongue too swollen. He raised his arm, but they weren't interested in him at all. They rode away with their prizes and left the rest for the lesser vermin. After they left, exhaustion and despair overcame him for the first time. As he was drifting off, he had a most peculiar dream. He dreamt he was floating on a raft in the middle of a cage. He was tied down to the raft, but could see out of his cage. It was like the opposite of a zoo. All the vermin came to look in at him. The rats, mice, snakes, and vultures, all came to see him. Finally, the hyaenas came, and he could smell them, but he felt secure inside his cage. The hyaenas leaped up and broke down the bars. The cage was filled with them, and he could remotely feel them tear his flesh with their teeth as they leaped upon him. They sank their teeth into his legs and shoulders, and some tore at his throat. But all this seemed very far away, and if he felt it at all it felt pleasant. Something deep inside of him swelled up and fought to regain consciousness, but he didn't let it. It felt so pleasant to be far away, and besides, the hyaenas weren't as vile as he had thought them. Among the nobility of vermin, they were, after all, only princes.

THE APOLOGY FOR WAR

by Greg Shelton

His mother's huge body heaves a horrendous sigh
As the war is now over.

Over now
For Larry.

The War was fought valiantly, intently
because. . . .
Now it's hard to remember
A cause.

Perhaps the cause is Mr. Slaker
Airplane maker
For the war.
Shiny silver airplanes that shimmer as they soar.

Perhaps the cause is Mr. Munds
Maker of guns
To kill the cruel enemy.

Cunning, cruel caustic enemy.
Perhaps the cause is Mr. Tacker
Undertaker
Who tick-tacked tacs
For Larry's tinsel-trapped coffin.
Ask Slaker, Munds, and Tacker.
The profit was worth the cost.

And Larry was but one of the many flag-draped.
How stupid, how small, how unpatriotic
For Larry's mother to cry
And heave her huge body
In a horrendous sigh.

The Establishment

by Lea Anne Conner

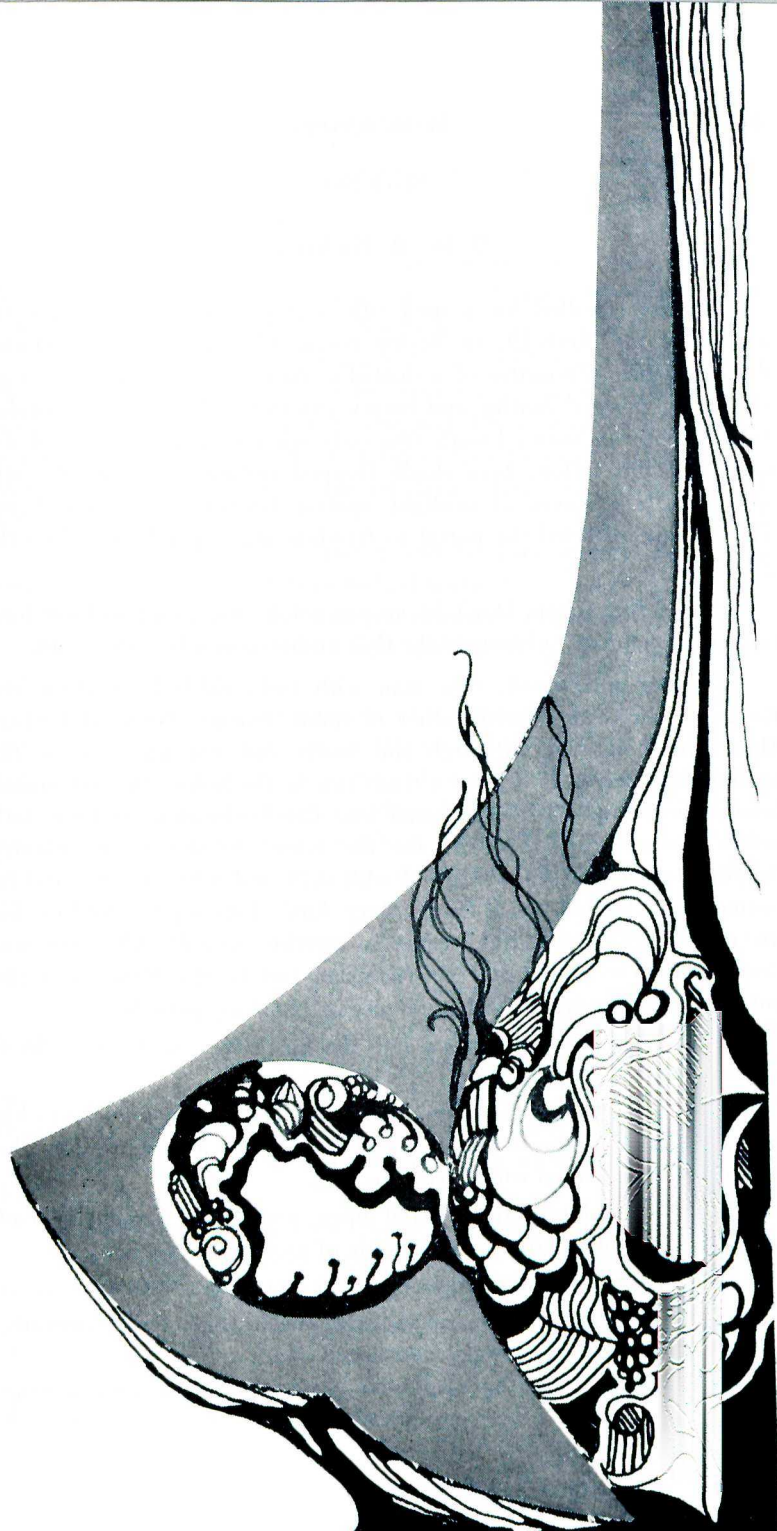
it is always such a long ride to the Establishment—not so far really—only the anticipation makes it long: like a journey into forgetfulness . . . so often almost there . . . very seldom there. even when we arrive we aren't in a geographical location: not two miles out of Bloomington, not in southern Indiana, not in the United States, only in the Establishment, on the Plantation, away from harshness and reality and into thought and intellect and humor—most important the humor. the first time we came: here on your right you see Union Valley Road. . . on your left (with the hand-painted sign) you see Confederate Ridge . . . that's only fair. . . don't you agree? as we started up Confederate Ridge i saw the Establishment. we are now crossing lynn timer memorial bridge (it was crumbling) and to your left you'll note Calvin Coolidge Expressway (sign also hand-painted). further up . . . the commentator continued. . . there's the bobby kennedy memorial drive (actually a turnaround-like fixture). you see. . . the Baron explained. . . the Establishment is what little is left of a progressive movement here (he always likes to talk in progressives and reformists and libs and conservs) you see: this started out as a housing development; but, as so often happens when the progressives bite off something, they didn't have enough cash to chew it: the streets got built and a couple of the houses were torn down, but that's all. the Establishment here. . . that's all that's left in this whole beautiful 140-acre southern Indiana hillside. . . and the pigpen beyond bobby kennedy memorial drive.

the Baron . . . it must be explained . . . is a male history student at Indiana University: actually i'm not in politics he would elaborate at an introduction: i'm studying to be a statesman. . . a qualified statesman. i believe that he will be—the Establishment proves it. the Baron and eight other politically-minded conservatives at IU rent the Establishment and publish from the Establishment a monthly magazine called the *Alternative* (simply an alternative to the new left which on the surface controls the campus). the *Alternative* is small but growing . . . has contributors like Goldwater and Buckley.

my first impression of the Establishment was that of amusement: the lawn in weeds . . . the back porch crumbling . . . no curtains at the windows . . . and a Wallace for President sign (which i knew was

strictly for confusion) on the door. i guess i expected too much: an inexpensive, respectable looking farmhouse. the farmhouse only materialized. as the Baron stood there with pride, i just laughed. you like it. . . i know you like it he said: wait till you see the inside. we came into the hall and he took my coat. there were books and manuscripts everywhere. i picked up the dummy for a coming issue. he took my arm: this is the John C. Calhoun room (a tropical fish tank, two chairs, a desk and books) and this is the Jeff Davis room (sofa, chair, stereo, fireplace and more books) the Blue Room is here (we were walking south in the Establishment) and it's our room for relaxing: the Blue Room is a bar, complete with L-shaped bar, four barstools made from tree trunks with the limbs sawed off to form steps, and a communist flag stolen from the 1964 Olympics hanging side-by-side with a United Nations flag. the kitchen we aren't too proud of he went on but we're fixing it up. the john f. kennedy room (the john) and the fdr room (the cellar) could use some improvement too, but it's not crucial.

that's the thing about the Establishment i guess: material things aren't crucial. you hear of people living on truth and beauty but you rarely see an example. the people living at the Establishment are hard-working students: the editor-in-chief is working on his phd in both history and journalism. the people come from well-to-do families, nice, well-to-do neighborhoods. they are conservatives and thinkers though: not hippies, they don't smoke pot or take lsd or demonstrate. through thought and the written word they are changing their society from the inside. they use jars for drinking glasses, get their plates out of soapboxes, watch all the sales on food. when you need quality you get it—at any price, but why support the inflationary libs the Baron would say . . . and so, as Beethoven's fifth fills the Establishment with its excitement and rapture. . . the Baron starts a fire in the fireplace. . . hands me a book and goes out to check the steaks he is grilling (on exactly the right number of charcoals . . . so as not to waste any). the Establishment is a way of forgetting all the unimportant necessities. . . the Establishment is a place of remembering to find oneself. . . a journey well worth the distance.



Black Sun

Walter W. Rudzinski

Gregory cradled his scoped rifle and watched the fly trace the outline of the dimly-lit, sweltering room. The buzzing insect skirted the dust-laden silhouettes of a dentist's chair with overhanging lamp, shelves of cracked bottles and empty canisters. A half-open window belched with an oven's breath (the only wind on a most hot and dry day) and the yellow, torn shade flopped restlessly against the sill, splashing lazy waves of sunlight against Gregory's sweating brow. The fly now detected the portal to freedom and zipped away into the glare.

"Good luck, chap. Don't let no one catch you. Froggies have long tongues, you know," whispered the fly's audience in a British accent.

Gregory was a tall, thin man with fashionably-long, thick red hair, the gift of a Scottish father of noble lineage. Or so did Sister Mary Ann tell him, although she really did not know since the orphanage received him from a trash can in the Soho. The orphanage became home until Hitler stormed into Czechoslovakia, and the tall, noble Scotsman marched off for the King. In the royal infantry Gregory learned to kill. He killed with skill and without pity, and he beamed with boyish joy at Sister Mary Ann's letters praising him for his many decorations. He became so terribly proud! After the war Gregory returned—not to the orphanage but to the Soho, and the noble Scot no longer received shiny medals but shiny pounds.

He glanced out the window into the hot glare—so far now from England.

A procession of glimmering-golden coins rolled ceaselessly in his brain, and Gregory could almost see himself frozen and shining on the face of each. He smiled with boyish joy.

The door behind him creaked open and shut. Gregory's head darted to his right and broke into a smile of greeting.

"Hallo, Jim. Bloody warm today, don't you think?"

"Sure is, Greg. In more ways than one," whispered a nervous, squat, white-faced American businessman.

Jim sat down next to Gregory, and both lapsed into a long silence.

"You know, Greg," explained Jim after several minutes, "I used to come to this dentist all the time."

"Before the revolution?"

"Yeah . . . before," answered Jim tapering off into reflection. "We never had that much trouble with the Blacks. They seemed to know their place. Then all of sudden boom—riots, assassinations, war. Somehow these Goddamn Africans got guns and a few breaks. Com-mies probably. Anyway they ended up on top. But with their leader gone, maybe the old order can be restored. There're still a lot of white people in this country . . . Anyway my corporation can't afford to shut down our plants here or, worse yet, hand them over to those black bastards!"

Jim finished his little oration and Gregory merely nodded approval, for it was the fiftieth time he had heard it.

"Well good luck, Greg," said Jim extending his hand.

"The plan is a good one. I will not fail. Goodbye, Jim." Gregory took the offered hand.

At the thump of the closing door, Gregory inched back the shade and watched the proceedings on the street below. Crowds of people had begun to line the pavement. Clusters of mothers and fathers reprimanded little, squirming children who wanted to play "tag" and not particularly see their president. Students debated government policy and the changes since the revolution, while old men shaded their eyes and waited patiently.

Gregory noted the absence of almost all white faces. Those that he could see were like Jim—disturbed, nervous, bitter.

Shouts vibrated the clinging heat. The crowd roared; children waved tiny flags.

As the motorcade rolled at parade speed into view, Gregory brought his rifle to the window sill. Through his scope he flitted from car to car in search of his man. He found him!

"Yes . . . so that's their president. Even uglier than his pictures, by Jove!"

The cross-hairs played with the shining black head.

"No, no, mustn't there. Too much gore. Got to make it according to plan. In the heart," whispered Gregory to his gun without emotion. "Clever chaps, these Americans. Silencer, full metal-cased cartridges. No noise, tiny holes, little blood. And even that blood not likely to come through my boy's vested-suit. Just like a heart attack, by Jove!" thought the noble Scotsman amusedly.

The rifle was aimed, the trigger pulled, and Gregory successfully caught the next flight to Switzerland and several thousand pounds.

For the crowd below, the sight of their slumping president catalyzed an ordered succession of emotion—silence, gasp, scream, wail.

The limousine accelerated swerving desperately through the crowds of shocked people mobbing the path. Squealing around a corner, the car lurched to avoid striking a little black girl, only to smash to the earth a white man. (The chauffeur felt no guilt, only relief at missing the girl.) Ironically the second victim of that afternoon was whitefaced, nervous Jim. His last reflex was to put up his hand to fend off the car, and in so doing he had ripped the small banner from the right bumper. And now he lay on the hot asphalt, his insides shattered and bleeding, staring at the little flag in his hand. In his brain burned the words "Seal of the President of the United States of America." His eyes twitched bitterly to meet the antagonistic stare of the black crowd which gathered around him. He looked down again at the seal; a tear rolled down his quivering cheek.

"Black Bastard!"

That night white hands dug the sandy soil of Fenwick Cemetery in Virginia. James Appleton was buried the next morning, August 10, 1974.

A Negro: Fred Woodbridge

By Terry Kindle

The Negro in America is a strange creature because society, noting that his skin is dark, immediately marks him as one who is different. He is always aware of this marking and thus adjusts his attitude toward other people accordingly. "How should I, a black man, evaluate myself in respect to this white man, and where exactly is my place in society?" This is a question which frequently confronts the Negro in today's world. One hundred years ago the answer was simple. The black man was unquestionably inferior: but all of that has changed now. The Negro no longer has to consider himself below the status of the white man. But just exactly what attitude should the Negro assume? Through our news media we often hear of the young militants such as H. Rap Brown who want equality in every sense of the word, and who are willing to fight to obtain this goal. Frequently, we of the white community hear the words of a thirty-nine year old Negro leader, the late Rev. Martin Luther King, who spoke of gaining equality through a program of conscientious non-violence. However, another large group of Negroes, those of the older generation, are not united behind any spokesman, and therefore the opinions of this class are usually overshadowed by the more vocal and boisterous messages of their offspring. For the past two years it has been the privilege of this writer to have been associated with a Negro of this older generation. Through working side by side with this man, sharing the frustrations of conflict as well as the satisfaction which labor can bring, I have been able to observe him as a man, and as a black man. Consequently, this careful observation of his character and his background have given me a unique chance to evaluate his answer to that inevitable question.

Fred Woodbridge is sixty-three years of age. As a young boy growing up on the Kentucky bank of the Ohio River, he learned to enjoy the pleasures which farm life afforded. Sweet honey over homemade cornbread, a slab of beef, and a cool drink of water were then luxuries of life. After a day of working in the fields, Fred would go with the other children down to the bank of the river where he waded in the shallows of the cool water with the muddy river bottom soothing the soles of his tired feet. However, life was not completely sweet. The crop would always feed the large family, but beyond that

money was scarce. As one of five children in a poor family, recognition was limited to a mother's love, and that had to be rationed out to all five. Resting in the shadows of the evening, Fred often thought of going far away from this farm life to a medical school where he would learn the trade of the doctor; but his education was limited and money was almost nonexistent. Thus the dreams of a colored boy were washed away with the silent flow of the Ohio River.

Opportunity for a Negro is extremely limited in Kentucky. After working in such jobs as mining coal, where the amount of brawn is the only qualification, Fred moved to Indianapolis, Indiana. Here is a state with a more northern attitude toward Negroes; the jobs may not have been too much better, but the opportunity for improvement was not limited to whites alone, and the living conditions were much improved. That was thirty years ago. Now Fred is employed in a new apartment project where his skills of fixing gadgets and his general knowledge are the important factors of his job. Although he is not a large man, standing only five feet ten inches, his general build still reflects the years of hard labor. His chest is solid; his arms and legs are stronger than those of the average man of sixty-three. The face, however, is the most deceptive factor. Despite the years of physical strain, the face is that of a much younger man. Wrinkles are just now beginning to appear around the flat, broad nose with the wide nostrils characteristic of a thoroughbred horse. The foremost hint of age is in the steadily greying hair, but the light brown hue of the skin gives a very pleasing background to the face.

As is often true, the condition of the body reflects the condition of the mind. Fred now feels that the years which are left to him should be spent in enjoying the small pleasures of life. As a deacon in his church, he is moderately religious, and holds the general attitude that God is waiting in heaven with a resting place from this turmoil called life. However, whatever degree of placidity which Fred Woodbridge finds here on earth, he is still confronted with the factor of race. Unlike the young militants who will not tolerate a double standard for the Negroes, and the moderates who believe the double standard must be removed through active non-violence, Fred much more readily accepts the fact that a double standard for the Negro is present today and will endure for many years to come. Fred Woodbridge, perhaps, represents the conservative side of the Negro view of race. His answer to this question which was raised previously would un-

doubtedly include a note of caution. When Fred meets a white man, he waits to see in what light the white man will regard him, and then he assumes this position. There is no fight in the man other than the struggle to preserve personal dignity. Fred Woodbridge will not fight for his rights because he lived too long in a world where they were denied; but he will not tolerate anyone trampling on his right to be a human being. As the young militant is the symbol of the new Negro who wants to live a life which is free of racial prejudice, thus Fred Woodbridge characterizes the old Negro who bears the scars of years of prejudice. For Fred the struggle of the Negro in America is one which will be settled on the personal scale, not in any group action. He would rather return home to Kentucky for a meal than to fight the battle of the Negro in the streets of America.

CHILDREN CROSSING

by Jeff Devens

SIGN: CHILDREN
CROSSING

CHILDREN: Let's cross the street.

MOTORIST: Damn kids — always playing
in the street where they don't
belong.

CHILDREN: (screams and cries, then silence)

PEOPLE: Oh, my God!

GOD: Oh, my people.

accident

by nancy mason

a cold crisp night
and voices laughing; voices echo
still, bright stars
a patient moon
and voices laughing; voices echo

door slam shut
the reflex locking
gliding forward
laughing; echo

a swift wide turn
an open door
sliding, sliding
a cold wind
terror: panic!
dragging dragging
hard, rough cement
merciless pavement
shrieking brakes
roll, crawl over to side
quickly—faster!
cars whiz by
voices echo; voices
no more

Patience

by Marquitta Meade

As I stood on the camp lawn, waiting for the bus to arrive with all the campers, I became panic-stricken. What was I going to do? How was I going to treat them? How would they react to me? What if something went wrong? That's what frightened me the most. What if something happened? The children that were coming were different from the kids I'd grown up with. They would not all be able to run like normal children and some of them would not even look like normal children. I was aware that each child had a physical handicap and each handicap was different from the rest. My concern was how to cope with the individual problems that would inevitably arise.

I didn't have to wait long for the answer. The bus pulled to a halt and children began streaming out before I realized what was happening. "You have to let them think that you know what you're doing, even if you don't. They're looking to you for help and you've got to be able to give it to them."

Within ten minutes, I was looking to them for help. I had found a young girl who couldn't talk. Again panic seized me and my mind went blank. What should I do? Thank God, she was more calm about the situation than I was. She took my hand to let me know that she understood. Then she printed letters in the air with her index finger to spell her name. j-u-d-y-t-a-y-L-o-R-i-M-l-4. Her name was Judy Taylor and she was fourteen.

Patience. That's what she had that I didn't.

I tried not to allow it, but inside myself, I suppose I felt sorrow for them. I thought of how awful it would be to never run or skip or dance. Life would be miserable, I thought. It amazed me to think that these children didn't consider themselves inferior or superior to other children. They thought of themselves as only different in appearance from others around them. One night, by accident, the cabin door had been left open. Maureen, a cardiac patient in a rear bed, told someone near the front of the cabin to close the door. Betty refused, saying "Do it yourself, you're not crippled." This shocked me, but no one else seemed to respond. Many of them had grown up with the word *crippled*.

Acceptance. That's what they had that I didn't.

And, in a way, I guess I pitied them. I didn't and couldn't see much of a future for them. Some of them would probably be invalids for the rest of their lives. I tried to forget about the future and concern myself only with the present. Then I learned of a boy who had been at camp years ago. He was now twenty, and able to do nearly everything that a normal person could. But, at the age of ten he couldn't even walk. One day, years ago, he was playing catch with a counselor. The boy stood very far away and started to pitch the ball. The counselor stopped him, saying that he couldn't catch the ball if the boy threw it from that distance. With sudden anger, the boy asked his counselor what the last four letters of American spell. Confused, the counselor answered "i-c-a-n." "You're right. I can. I can. I can." The boy yelled. He could, and he did overcome his handicap.

Faith. That's what he had that I didn't.

Patience, Acceptance, and Faith are the three gifts which these children gave me. Someday, I will pass these gifts on to other children, and I hope that they, in turn, will do the same. Life was made happier for me by handicapped children, the children whom people so often pity.

The First Crusade

Joan O'Sullivan

One-act play

CAST

Joe Young—a mild-mannered, but concerned college student of 24
the Goodman People—a group of dedicated, hardworking, unorganized
campaigners
the American Electorate—an eternally amazing body of people

Scene i

The Beginning

(Joe comes onto the empty stage alone and addresses the audience.)

Joe: Well, there I was—a peaceful, non-involved, non-violent, non-protesting student. Just minding my own business, not really happy about the country or the way things were going, but not the kind to burn my card or sit in or anything. You know—just a regular old college Joe, if you'll pardon the pun.

Then I heard this Goodman guy speak. He talked about the war, about what was happening in the cities, about what should be happening that wasn't. He just kind of stood up there and talked. For no other reason than cause he believed it. You could tell he did. That was before anyone else stood up, before all the rest of this happened. But anyway, what he said really sounded good, and I got kind of hooked on the guy. I figured this was my kind of politician—a non-politician—and that maybe this was where I should be doing my thing. So I went down to headquarters and “got involved,” as they say. It's really kind of wild—we're just a bunch of a-political people who are still kind of bewildered at finding ourselves in the middle of the political road, and we're in real danger of getting run off the road completely by the big shiny machines that keep whizzing along, but all we can do is just keep plodding along, telling it like it is. Right? Who knows.

Scene ii

The Sign-In

(A row of apartment doors in a U around the stage, numbering seven altogether. Joe enters from the left carrying a clipboard. He knocks at the first door and begins confidently when it is opened by a dumpy, middle-aged woman in a plaid bathrobe.)

Joe: Good evening, Ma'm. I'm a college student working for Senator Goodman, and we's like your signature on this petition to allow him to run in the primary in the state next month. If you'll just sign here. . . .

No. 301: Huh?

Joe: (sighs and speaks very slowly and distinctly) Senator Goodman, Ma'm. No doubt you've heard him on TV. He intends to run in the presidential primary here if we can get enough signatures on this petition. That's why I need you to sign. . .

No. 301: Yeah, well, I gotta go Kid. I got a cake in the oven (Starts to close the door.)

Joe: But it'll just take a second—you just have to sign your name and address.

No. 301: Not today kid. Come back next week maybe. (No. 301 shuts the door and Joe goes on to the next one. It is opened by a thin bald man dressed in a bathrobe and holding a newspaper.)

Joe: Good evening, Sir—I'm. . .

No. 302: You one of those kids working for Goodman?

Joe: Yes sir, I am—and I . . .

No. 302: I thought so. You can go to hell, you goddam Com-mie! (Slams the door.)

Joe: God, I think I'm in the wrong neighborhood. (At the next door a well-dressed, middle-aged man answers and stands there impatiently.)

Joe: Good evening, sir. I'm working for Senator Goodman, collecting signatures to enable him to run in the primary next month.

No. 303: Oh, Christ. (Yells behind him.) Hey, Michelle, come here! (To Joe.) I can't sign, y'see—I don't live in the state—just passing through. (A plump, bleached blonde with frizzy hair appears at the door dressed in a slip and houseslippers.) Sign this kid's thing, Michelle. It's for the primary.

Michelle: Ohhhh, what a nice young man. You're one of those college students, aren't you, dear? I know your man must be good with all you goodlooking people working for him. Who's this for? Oh yes, Senator Goodman. Oh, I saw nm on TV the other day. . .

No. 303: Never mind the chatter, Michelle, just sign the thing. We haven't got all night, you know.

Michelle: Now, Claudie, don't be impatient—I just want to talk to the young man.

Joe: That's fine, Ma'm. Thanks a lot now.

Michelle: (leans in the doorway while 303 tries to close it.) You're so welcome, Honey. You come back, now, if you need any more help. Hear? I'll be glad to help in any old way I can.

Joe: Yes Ma'm. Thanks. .

No. 303: For God's sake, Micehlle, come on. Leave the poor kid alone. (Yanks her inside and slams the door.)

Joe: Whew! Least she was friendly. (Knocks at the next door. After a wait he knocks again. The door opens a tiny crack.)

Joe: Good evening, un. . . .

No. 304: What'd you want?

Joe: I'm a college student working for Senator Goodman and. . .

No. 304: You come back tomorrow. I don't open my door to anybody at night.

Joe: Really, Ma'm, it's quite safe. I'd just like you to sign a petition for Senator Goodman. I'll just slip it through the door if you'd like. . . .

No. 304: You go away.

Joe: But it's really ok—I don't even want to come in. I just want you to

No. 304: I'll call the police if you don't go away! I'll tell them you're trying to break in. You get out of here!

Joe: Ok, ok, I'm leaving. (Reaches out and slams it before she has a chance to. A small shriek comes from inside and he chuckles as he goes to the next door. A harrassed-looking woman comes to the door carrying a baby. There is the sound of children fighting in the room behind her.)

Joe: Good evening. I'm a college student working for Senator Goodman. I'm collecting signatures to enable him to run in the primary here next month.

No. 305: Yeah, well I'd love to help you out, Sweetie, but I haven't decided yet.

Joe: Well, that's the point of the petition, Ma'm. By enabling as many candidates as possible to run, you get a wider choice. Signing the petition puts you under no obligation to vote for the Senator—it's just an assurance that you'll have the *chance* to vote for or against him when the primary comes.

No. 305: Sure, Honey, but I don't sign anything unless I'm sure of it, see my point? I don't think it's healthy.

Joe: But if everyone felt that way no one would be able to run because we wouldn't have any signatures. It's an important part of the democratic process.

No. 305: Honey, if I sign that they'll put me on a list down at City Hall and they'll have me pegged for the rest of my life. I won't get nothing from this city if I sign that. Your man ain't the most popular guy in the world, you know.

Joe: Honestly, Ma'm, there's no recrimination or penalty for signing whatsoever. You won't get in trouble with anybody.

No. 305: Like I said, Kid, I really wish I could help you, but I've got enough troubles as it is. Four kids and my old man's not here

half the time he's supposed to be. I can't risk it. You see my point?

Joe: Well no, but . . . sure. It's ok, Ma'm. Thanks anyway.

No. 305: I wish I could help ya kid, really I do.

Joe: Sure, Ma'm. Good night. (Joe goes to the next door. It is answered by a fat woman in a housedress.)

Joe: Hello, Ma'm. I'm a college student working for Senator Goodman. We're collecting signatures. . . (She holds up her hand to stop him and bawls out behind her.)

No. 306: Sam! Oh Sam! C'mere! Hurry up! (She stands silently glaring at Joe until Sam, equally obese, appears behind her.) This kid wants me to sign something, Sam.

Joe: Good evening, Sir. This is a petition asking to allow Senator Goodman to run in the primary next month.

Sam: Hold it, son. You're at the wrong place. We're the opposition party. My wife and me and my brother-in-law.

Joe: But you can still sign the petition. This is request to allow the Senator to run.

Sam: What do you think I am, Kid? Crazy? Vote for somebody in the other party?

Joe: No, Sir. This isn't a vote or even a promise of a vote. This simply. . .

Sam: Mabel, come on. Get away from the door. This kid must be *nuts*! (He slams the door. Joe sighs and goes to the last door. It is opened by a man of about 65, dressed in casual clothes. Joe begins hesitantly.)

Joe: Good evening, Sir. I'm a college student, and I'm collecting signatures for uh. . . Senator Goodman. . . to allow him to run in the primary, you know? And I just wondered if you would sign the petition.

No. 307: Senator Goodman, huh? Yes, well, to tell you the truth, I've been doing a lot of thinking about Goodman.

Joe: (Incredulously.) You have?

No. 307: Yes, I like the man.

Joe: Really?

No. 307: He has a lot to say—not too well known, but a lot of good points.

Joe: Why, yes, he does.

No. 307: Come in while I sign it, Son. Would you like a Coke? I'll get my wife so she can sign too.

Joe: Thank you, Sir. Yes, sir.

(Fadeout)

Scene iii

Message From Headquarters

(Joe stands in a phone booth upper stage right. The rest of the stage remains dark except when people are speaking on the other end of the line; at these times they are illuminated by spots. Joe drops in a dime and dials a number on a sheet of paper.)

Hdqtrs: Goodman for President Headquarters. May I help you, please?

Joe: Yes. I'm calling Mrs. Julia Heinsdorf, please.

Hdqtrs: What extension, please?

Joe: I don't know. I just got a message to call her at that number.

Hdqtrs: What is the call about, sir?

Joe: All my message says is to return her call at that number. I've never heard of her before.

Hdqtrs: Well, neither have I, Sir. We have 53 extensions here and unless I know which one you want. . .

Joe: Look, don't you have a directory or something?

Hdqtrs: Let's try the Advance Desk. Maybe she's there. (She plugs in a line and a spot opens on Advance.)

Advance: Advance.

Joe: Is Mrs. Julia Heinsdorf there, please?

Advance: Who is this?

Joe: My name is Joe Young. I'm supposed to call Mrs. Julia Heinsdorf.

Advance: Well, she's not here. I think she's over in the Press Room today. I'll get the board for you and she'll transfer the call.

Joe: Thanks. (Advance clicks the phone loudly in Joe's ear for a minute then says)

Advance: Look, I can't get anyone there. Why don't you just call in again and ask for the Press Room.

Joe: Yeah, ok. Thanks. (Joe drops in another dime and calls again.)

Hdqtrs: Goodman for President headquarters. May I help you?

Joe: Press Room, please.

Hdqtrs: Hang on. (She plugs in a line and rings it. Joe waits. She files a nail and rings again. Joe waits.)

Hdqtrs: There's no answer in the Press Room, Sir.

Joe: No answer? There's *always* people in there. Besides, the

Senator's having a press conference there in an hour—there's gotta be somebody there.

Hdqtrs: Well, Sir, if there's no answer there's no answer. It's not my fault if. . . oh. Sorry sir, Wrong hole. (Switches plug.) *There you go.*

Press: Hello?

Joe: Mrs. Julia Heinsdorf please.

Press: Who?

Joe: Mrs. Julia Heinsdorf.

Press: Hang on. Anybody seen Izzy? Hey, hello? She just went out for coffee—call back in about a half hour, ok?

Joe: Yeah, Ok. (Black out and fade in. Joe drops in another dime and dials again.)

Hdqtrs: Goodman for President. May I help you?

Joe: Press Room.

Hdqtrs: Just a moment, please.

Press: Hello?

Joe: Mrs. Julia Heinsdorf.

Press: Izzy! Phone!

Mrs. Heinsdorf: Hello?

Joe: Mrs. Heinsdorf, this is Joe Young—I was left a message to call you earlier?

Mrs. Heinsdorf: Oh, yes Mr. Young. I did call you but since you didn't return my call I had to get someone else. Too bad you didn't call before. (Joe slams down the phone and walks out swearing.)

Scene iv

Grassroots Canvass

(A row of houses suggestive of a lower middle class housing development. The houses are all alike except that they are painted different drab pastel shades. Joe enters carrying a paper shopping bag covered with Goodman stickers and a list of names.)

Joe: (Consulting list.) Let's see. Mrs. Esther Brady. Aged 49. Independent. (Knocks at the door.) Good morning Mrs. Brady. My name is Joe Young and I'm working for Senator Goodman's campaign. I'd like to know if there are any questions I can answer about the Senator or if. . .

Mrs. Brady: No son. I don't have any questions. And I'll tell you why I don't. You want to know why I don't?

Joe: Yes, Ma'm.

Mrs. Brady: I'll tell you why. Because it doesn't matter one particle of difference who wins this election and who doesn't.

Joe: How can you say that? After all, there's a great deal of difference between the several candidates, and considering the state the country's in right now. . .

Mrs. Brady: Son, do you know who really runs this country? I mean, who *really* runs it? Really?

Joe: The President and the Congress and. . .

Mrs. Brady: Son, you are so *wrong*! You are *so* wrong. Everyone in this country who believes that old story is wrong. Do you know who really runs this United States of America? Back there in Washington, sitting in an office with a direct line to the President, there are three men. And do you know who they are—those three men?

Joe: No, Ma'm.

Mrs. Brady: Those men are COMMUNISTS! They're Commies, son, and that's why it doesn't make any difference if Goodman or Brendan or Abraham Lincoln wins this election—those three men are still going to be sitting in that office telling him what to do—running this country.

Joe: Well, I've never heard that theory before—are you really sure of that? Because it seems pretty impossible.

Mrs. Brady: Sure it seems impossible to you, because you don't know. I *know*, Son. I've got it right here on the printed page. You just wait a minute, I'll give you these magazines and then you'll know. (Goes out and returns with a pile of pulp magazines.) You just read these, Son, and you'll be amazed at some of the things the so-called U.S. Government is putting over on us.

Joe: I'm sure I will, Ma'm. Who did you say prints this?

Mrs. Brady: That doesn't matter. That's not important at all. What matters is that it's the truth—the gospel truth.

Joe: Yeah. Well, thanks a lot for the magazines, Mrs. Brady. May I leave you some literature about Senator Goodman, though? Perhaps you could. . . .

Mrs. Brady: I told you before, Son, it doesn't matter. (She leans over and hisses emphatically into Joe's face) IT JUST DOESN'T MATTER. (She turns around and abruptly goes inside. Joe shakes his head, makes a note on his sheet and goes onto the next house. A fragile-looking old lady answers the door.)

Joe: Good morning, Ma'm. My name is Joe Young and I'm working for Senator Goodman. We're going around talking to people

—finding out how they feel about the Senator or if they have any questions about him.

Mrs. Wing: Oh, I like the man *so* much. I've been watching him on TV and I just think the world of him. He's *so intelligent* and dignified.

Joe: I'm happy to hear you say that.

Mrs. Wing: Well, yes. You know, he doesn't go around spending a lot of money or making promises like those others do, you know? He just comes right out and says what he thinks. And you can *believe* him, can't you?

Joe: That's one of the things that first attracted me to him. I'm really glad to talk to you, Ma'm. I haven't found too many supporters of the Senator in this neighborhood.

Mrs. Wing: Well, I just wish I could vote for him.

Joe: Oh. You aren't registered?

Mrs. Wing: Oh yes. I'm registered all right. Been voting in this precinct for nearly 42 years now. I'm certainly registered, if anyone is.

Joe: But why can't you vote for Goodman, then?

Mrs. Wing: Well, Son, the truth is that if I voted for Goodman I'd lose all my friends. They're all in the other party, you know. Why, I just mentioned to them that I admired Senator Goodman and no one spoke to me for nearly three weeks. They were very, *very* cool to me.

Joe: But you don't have to tell them who you vote for. They'll never know.

Mrs. Wing: Oh, they'll know. They always find those things out. I don't know how, but they do. I guess it's my fault, really. Can't keep my big mouth shut.

Joe: I just can't see how they could hold a thing like that against you, though. If you really believe in the man. . . .

Mrs. Wing: You just don't know my friends. Some of them have been holding grudges for 35 years. Wouldn't make up if they were on their death beds. I can't risk it, Dear. I'm too old—all alone here now—my friends are all that's left. I wish I could vote for your man—it's not that I don't respect him. I just can't.

Joe: Could I leave you some literature? Perhaps you could convert them or something.

Mrs. Wing: Oh, goodness no! I couldn't even let that be seen in my house. It was nice to talk to you, young man. I'm happy to see you young people doing something good for a change.

Joe: Yes, Ma'm.

Mrs. Wing: I hope he wins, Son. But don't tell any of the neighbors that.

Joe: No, Ma'm. Not a word. (Joe marks on his list and goes on to the next house, muttering in disgust. The door is answered by a cheerful, bald man in his sixties.)

Joe: Morning, Sir. I'm working for Senator Goodman and I'd just like to talk to you about him—find out how you feel about him.

Pratt: Why sure, Son. Be glad to. Like a beer?

Joe: No thanks, but a glass of water would be good.

Pratt: Water, hell. You wait right here. (He enters his house and comes back with two cans of beer. They sit on the steps.) There you are, Kid. Politicing's hard work—you'll need this. I know that for a fact—I was in politics for nearly 25 years. Precinct chairman around here. Just got out of it last year—you know why?

Joe: No, Sir.

Pratt: Too damn crooked, that's why! Politics is the rottenest business on earth. Finally got too rotten for me.

Joe: Well, what do you think of Senator Goodman, Sir?

Pratt: I'll tell you, Son. I think he's a fine man. A real fine man. Got a lot of good things to say. Sounds real good to me. But I'm not going to vote for him. I'm not sure I'm going to vote for anybody.

Joe: Why is that?

Pratt: Because I can't trust him. He's too good. You can't trust a man like that. He's going to get to the convention, you see. He's going to have some votes, but Brendan and Simons are going to have more. And then Goodman and Brendan are going to start the wheeling and dealing. Brendan's going to come out on top with Goodman in the number two spot. You just watch, son. I've spent too many years in politics to think otherwise. Sure Goodman looks good now—he's got nothing to lose.

Joe: But he's said that won't happen. He's said repeatedly that he doesn't regard his delegates as a commodity to be traded and that there'll be no deals at the convention.

Pratt: Hell, Son. The deal's already been made. Goodman's just a part of Brendan's machine—has been all long. Just a cog in the wheel.

Joe: I don't see how you can say that, sir. The Senator has said over and over. . . .

Pratt: "He said," "He said," "He said,"—Son, you're young. You're just starting in politics. Just barely old enough to vote, I'd say.

And you've got a lot to learn. About the candidates, about the people, about the parties, about the deals. And one of the first things you've got to learn is that three-fourths of what a politician says is a pack of lies. Doesn't mean a damn thing. All Goodman's high flown ideas, all his morality and ethical conduct—just wait until August, Boy, and he'll be singing a different song then!

Joe: But what if he's not lying? Why is it so impossible that he's saying those things because he believes them? What if he's telling the truth—why is that so wrong? It's just possible that he is, you know.

Pratt: Son, I wish I could help you, but the only way you're going to learn is by experience. It'll just take time. I wish I could believe like you do. But I've been in it too long and I *know*—all politicians are crooked. Not a one of them is an honest man—honest men don't get elected in this country. They can't afford it, for one thing.

Joe: Well, I think you're wrong, but I guess we'll just have to wait and see. You may be right—I may be immature and inexperienced and idealistic, but Senator Goodman is the only politician I've ever had any faith in and I can't believe he isn't honest. Thanks for the beer—I've gotta get working now.

Pratt: Sure Kid. Before you go though, let me tell you a little secret. This is what I *really* think is going to happen at the convention. This is why it doesn't make a hell of a lot of difference who we vote for. Ok—Judson says he's not going to run again, right? Ok—I can see him settling this damn war along about the middle of July. He'll be a national hero, right? Right. And they'll draft him at the convention, he'll run with Simons and get re-elected. Then around the last of December or the first of January, he'll plead physical exhaustion, *resign*, and Simons will be in. Now you just watch and see—that's what I think is really going to happen.

Joe: Yeah. Well, it could. I've gotta go, Sir.

Pratt: Sure, Kid. I wish I could believe in your man like you, but I've been around too long, you see what I mean, Kid?

Joe: Sure. Thanks. (Joe makes another mark on his sheet and knocks at the next door. A woman in her thirties answers with rollers in her hair.)

Joe: Hello, Ma'm. I'm working for Senator Goodman and I'd like to talk to you about him—find out how you feel about him.

Mrs. Bagby: (Viciously.) You want to know how I feel about him? I wouldn't vote for that goddam nigger-lover if you paid me!

And you'd better get out of my neighborhood or I'll call the cops. (She slams the door. Joe makes another mark and goes to the last house.)

Joe: Well, it's new anyway. She's the first one to call him a nigger-lover. Good morning, sir. I'm a college student working for Senator Goodman. I'd like to talk to you about him—find out how you feel about him or if you have any questions about him, Sir.

Tikner: Well, Boy, it's this way. I don't give a hang one way or the other who gets elected. I'm not even going to vote. What do I need to vote for? I'm 87 years old and I got everything I need. My house is paid for. I got a garage. I got my wife to cook for me—oh, she's a good woman. Too good for me, you understand.

Joe: Do you have grandchildren, Sir?

Tinker: Hell, I got great-grandchildren I ain't never seen yet. They don't come round here too often.

Joe: Don't you care what kind of world they have to grow up in? You could help decide that by voting.

Tinker: Well, hell, that's their problem. That's the way I see it. Nobody gave me a helping hand. When I started out I was fourteen years old and didn't have a cent. And look what I got now. I've had hard times. Been married three times. Marriage ain't all that good, Boy. But its got its advantages. First wife died and left me with three little ones. People told me I should get rid of them—start all over. Give 'em away. And I could'a done it. Lots of people wanted 'em. But I didn't and nobody helped me then. I done it all myself, and what do I have now? Just look at this. Come here, Boy, and look at these shrubs. These things are the most important things in my life. Cost \$80 apiece, but they're worth it. Rub your face in 'em—go ahead. They won't bite ya like them over there—they're soft and gentle. Won't make ya cry if ya fall in 'em.

Y'see Boy—I got everything I need. What do I care who runs the country? I got everything now.

Joe: Yes Sir. Well, then, I'd better get moving again.

Tinker: Son, let me tell you something before you go about women. Now don't get me wrong—I'm just trying to help you, understand? Ok. I got lots of experience—been married three times. The one I got now's the best. Don't give me any trouble. Just cooks and keeps her mouth shut. You be careful before you marry a girl, Son. You get to know her first . . . Don't marry some fool girl just cause she got a good pair of pins. That part of marriage don't last

long enough to bother about. You make sure she ain't no fool first of all, cause you've got to live with her a long time and if she's a fool she'll be an angel to ya for a couple of years and then she'll turn around and be a devil the rest of you life. Now don't get me wrong, Son. I'm just trying to help you.

Joe: Yes, Sir and I appreciate it, but I think I'd better. . . .

Tinker: Now just listen to an old man for a minute. I'm not as dumb as you think. I'm just trying to help you, cause if you marry without thinking you'll be in hell before you're dead. You got to know your woman—know how to handle the bitch.

Joe: Yes, Sir. Well, I'm not ready to settle down yet, but I'll remember what you said.

Tinker: That's right, Boy—plenty of time for all that. Here comes my old woman now. Been buying food. Yep, she's ok. You don't have to tell her what I said though. You understand—I'm just trying to help ya.

Joe: Thanks a lot, Sir.

Tinker: Sure, Boy. You just remember what I said.

Joe: Sure. I will (Joe walks to stage right and consults his list.)
God, I've gotten everything today except votes. (Exits.)

Scene v

Post Primary

(A small Goodman storefront. About 15 supporters of college age are milling about; a TV is blaring from one corner of the room. The walls are covered with posters and slogans; there are many phones and half empty shopping bags strewn about.)

Joe: God, when's that food coming? I haven't eaten anything except coffee and donuts all day.

Mick: Me either, except the coffee at the place where I was was rancid or something.

Leo: Hey quiet down, you guys—new returns. (All turn their attention to the TV.)

TV: With 23% of the precincts across the state reporting, the totals are Brendan—40%, Goodman—31% and Simons—29%.

(A cheer goes up around the room.)

Wendy: Like Wow! We're going to catch him yet! We've gone up two in the last forty-five minutes.

(Everyone talks enthusiastically as Driver enters. He is a man in his 40's, casually dressed, carrying a long loaf of bread and a large bowl.)

Driver: Ok, kids, come and get it—tuna salad in the bowl. I left the beer and potato chips in my car. Somebody go get them. Wait'll you taste the tuna fish—my wife makes *great* tuna fish.

Sam: Hey, anything's better than glazed donuts.

Mick: Yeah, or rancid coffee.

(The crowd settles down to eat. General goodwill and cheerfulness prevail. The TV announcer returns.)

TV: In the presidential primary, ladies and gentlemen, with 30% of the preceincts now reporting, it is Brendan with 42%, Simons with 30% and Goodman with 28%, a fall of 3% for Goodman since we last reported. . . .

(Groans and muttering. Joe gets up to fix another sandwich and stands by the window eating it.)

Joe: Hey, you guys. You're not going to believe this.

Wendy: What now?

Joe: A big truck just pulled up in front of Brendan's headquarters across the street.

Mick: What is it—an armored car to collect their bumper sticker money?

Joe: Close. The sign says, "Buffets—Banquets for All Occasions—Continental Caterers."

(More groans and mutterings. Joe stands, eating his sandwich contemplatively.)

Joe: Hey, you know what else? This is *fantastic* tuna fish!

Fadeout.

TWO CHILDREN

by Jeff Devens

1st. child: Let's play a game.

2nd. child: O.K.—What'll we play?

1st. child: Let's play THE END.

2nd. child: How do you play?

1st. child: I'll be God.

2nd. child: What do I do?

1st. child: Pray.

CONFIDANTE

by Linda Millican

By twisting just a little to the right, the young woman was able to avoid the spring that was jutting up from the worn upholstery. She finally found a comfortable position in the rather ancient back seat of the Red Cab. Again she was alone with her thoughts, and the same ones kept returning. Just like they had during her three day stay at Community Hospital. She had been in a minor accident and had been unconscious for twenty-three hours. The next forty-nine hours had been occupied with the usual white blur of the various attendants as well as a snowy blur of thought and feelings. Now they were returning to crowd her mind, but this time she could push them aside because she was out in the real world again.

"Hey, up there, mister, have you ever been in an accident? I mean, not that I worry about your driving, but I just got out of the hospital because of a minor car wreck. I mean, have you ever had an accident of any kind and been unconscious?"

The taxi driver mumbled something about being a good driver and the crazy things people ask about. She analyzed him as a listener, period. He probably wouldn't even grumble again, just nod his head at random intervals in her monologue. But she needed to talk.

"Being unconscious for almost a whole day is really weird. What a crazy feeling to wake up and be told that a whole segment of your life has slipped by without so much as consulting you! And how inconvenient. . . I didn't even have any of my things with me. . . none of those little things you take for granted at home." She could feel the anxiety swelling up, and she barely whispered, "I can't wait to get back." It didn't matter any more if the driver was indifferent. Charlene Brenner was lost in her own thoughts.

She settled back and fingered the message the nurse had delivered to her just before she checked out. The neatly teletyped note was fresh from the answering machine. "Sorry I can't make it to pick you up, dear, but this Board of Directors meeting could mean my next job." She folded it neatly and put it in her purse. She relaxed, gave up on any conversation with the driver, and enjoyed the bright sunshine. "That's not so bad, that Benjamin can't take me triumphantly back to our apartment. This way I can have a few hours alone to think about this whole silly incident, and I'll even have time to record it all

in my diary before he returns home. That will be good because all the feelings are still fresh in my mind. It's almost funny how I missed not being able to write in that thick leather book once a day."

The taxi wound through an apartment complex. The driver indifferently blew the smoke from his cigar out into the fresh suburban air, and Charlene shifted her weight in the seat and tried to get as comfortable as possible. In the stillness she let her thoughts snowball about the volumes of personal feelings and confessions she had revealed to the pages of her diary. She recalled the first time she had even gotten angry with her parents, and, since a fifteen-year-old couldn't yell back, she had written a venomous letter. Three days later she had torn it into tiny shreds and burned it in an ash tray she had secreted away from her father's den.

Slowing down, the driver turned and said, "Thirty-two forty-one, lady?" He caught her unconscious nod and pulled the taxi up next to the mail box. She paid him and then just stood outside the building she had left three days earlier. After a few moments she picked up the train case of necessities that Benjamin had brought on his first visit to the hospital after the doctor said she would be alright. She headed toward the entrance way, and, a little uncertainly, navigated the three flights of stairs. Such exercise was a bit exhausting after three days of complete bed rest. She found herself humming as she faced the big blue door with 316 boldly embossed in the middle. She considered doing a curtsy and stopping to ask permission to be admitted into the royal castle. She slipped the key in the lock and worked with it a few moments. It always got stuck. Soon she was inside her own domain. She quietly shut the door and leaned against its security. The sunlight cast patterns on the gold carpet, and there was no need to ruin the mood of the early afternoon by turning on the lights. The door to the bedroom was slightly ajar. She walked in and found herself standing in front of an innocent and familiar piece of furniture.

"The strangest thing about being unconscious is that you don't even regret the time you've lost. It's just a big blank that replaces the unpleasantness that would have filled it! Almost wish a person could do that whenever he needed to." She opened the bottom drawer to her dresser and reached toward the back left-hand side. Then she tried the right-hand side. The she tried the left-hand side again. She pulled out all the sweaters and shoved them aside. She leaned back and sighed. "Now c'mon, you just couldn't have lost that!" Her hands probed into every corner of the drawer and searched through all the sweaters.

She sat down on the floor in front of the dresser. "Now, c'mon, Char, just remain calm and try to remember where you put it the last time you wrote in it." There was little comfort in that thought because she knew she had put it in that back corner of that bottom drawer. The last time she had gone through this trauma was in college after she had scrawled pages of scathing criticism of her room-mate. Then she had remembered that she had merely changed the hiding place because she didn't want anyone to be suspicious of any one particular place. Now, in the privacy of her own home, there was no reason to worry about someone finding it. . . except. . .

"I just know I left it in this drawer. It didn't disintegrate into thin air. Some of the things Benjamin doesn't know about are written in that book. I've become so very free when I write in that diary that Benjamin would be quite shocked about some of it . . . quite shocked."

There on the floor of the bedroom she shared with her husband, she couldn't hold back the wealth of memories she had so cautiously locked away in that diary.

The smell of the Dean's Office even returned with the memory of the fear that had engulfed her when she heard the secretary call her into the inner office for a review with the women's council. She wouldn't let herself think about the earlier long weekend she had spent learning about life and love, but the impact of the strict probationary rules they imposed upon her for this extra-curricular part of her education would always remain close to her immediate recall. The disgust that had filled her was still poignant in her memory as she visualized the clear sunshiny day when she packed up her luggage and started walking away from those petty rules and those little people.

A dread chilled her as she visualized her husband's shock upon reading that diary. She stood quickly and attacked the left-hand side of the bottom dresser drawer again. Every drawer was siezed, ravaged, and then slowly returned. With each new drawer she remembered a feeling or an event that she had carefully recorded in the hidden little book instead of risking her husband's reaction. Frantically she searched every possible place where the diary could be. Their apartment consisted of five small but cozy rooms.

"It's just not here, there isn't one place it could be that I haven't checked. Heaven knows I've even checked the most unlikely places too! It must have been . . . taken. Why? Why would anyone . . . who. . . ?" She had to sit down again. Her eyes continued the search but without

any hope. There was just a questioning fear in her face that was becoming more and more apparent. "Benjamin said he had that Julia Whitcomb help him pack the overnight bag he brought to the hospital. Maybe . . . when she was helping with that she discovered it." She could conceive of only two people who would have been in her drawers while she was gone. The idea that either of them might know all her secrets overwhelmed her.

Those precious hours that she had blessed on her taxi ride home had passed. Benjamin would be arriving soon. He had stopped by the babysitter's to pick up little John and the two would be entering any moment. A quick glance satisfied Charlene that all had been returned to a state of innocence, and her frantic search had left nothing in an uproar. Thanks be to that old college room-mate who had taught her to clean up her messes as soon as she had made them!

There was the sound of a key sticking in the lock. She unconsciously held her breath. His tall silhouette with the shadow of his son draped over one shoulder reminded her that she had forgotten to turn on the lights since she returned, although the dimness could easily be mistaken for a romantic atmosphere.

"Darling! It's so great to have you home again." He unwound his sleepy son from his shoulder and threw the supply bag in the nearest chair. He wrapped his arms around her and mumbled about how he had missed her and had worried about her. "The little one asked every day if he could stay here with mommy instead of going to the sitter's. Why he just cried and cried at night when I'd put him to bed. Now would you like to know how much your loving husband missed you?" He growled and picked her up to spin her around in circles. His arms were strong and secure. His power over her was unquestioned; it never had been challenged.

She kept observing his eyes, trying to detect something in his voice, and also to keep him from suspecting that she suspected or knew that he had betrayed her solemn vow of secrecy. But he had never been aware that she had taken a vow of privacy when they had married. Her embraces and warm words satisfied him, but underneath every action there was an alertness to any revealing information about her diary.

"Julie was so kind to help you out for these three days. I bet she was a real gem for little things around the house too. Did she help you clean up around here or did she just give her opinion about what I would need in that overnight bag?"

"Oh, Julie. Yea, she just came over that one day and said 'yes, of course,' or 'don't be silly Benjamin.' The clean-up is all mine. . . John thinks he helped so remember to thank him in the morning. Perhaps we'd better tuck him in." He gently cradled his son in his arms and nodded toward the necessities bag while heading for the small den that served as the boy's bedroom.

That night all was warm and tender. He never realized that her mind was returning again and again to a small leather book.

The next day while he was at the office she searched once again. It was to no avail. She plotted and planned how she could let him tell her he didn't even know the diary existed. Then she practiced short discourses which flatly revealed her secret and asked for his help in locating the book. Those practices lasted about ten minutes and she decided that was impractical . . . and why reveal the whole thing to him! For the lack of anything more satisfactory she decided she would have to wait and see if he let any new knowledge slip out. More hopefully, she decided that some time would reveal if his reactions to her were the same as they had always been or if there was a change.

During the next few days she knew she was being skillful in her observations, but she was also getting impatient because her obscure, subtle methods weren't giving any definite results. The possibility of confiding in him entered her mind on the second day. The thought of baring all her needs to him presented itself and departed after a short consideration. He just wouldn't understand.

As the weeks passed, Charlene heard herself asking him snide little questions, and picking up little habits or supposedly new attitudes as indicative of his reaction to the passages in the diary. She was afraid to acknowledge the diary in case she was mistaken, but she seemed to find all these possible indications that he knew more than she had ever told him.

The third Sunday after her return it happened. He took offense at one of her questions. They were preparing a picnic to take to Hunting Park for an all-day escapade. He asked her if she like to take off on escapades; she started and asked what he meant.

"Every damn time I make a statement these days, you ask 'Now what do you mean by *that*?' I've had it. I say what I mean. Char, the most *innocent* little comments have gotten me more 'go-to-hell' looks in the past few weeks than I would have thought were possible. I just don't understand you any more, I just plain don't understand."

"Did you ever? Did you ever really try to understand me? Why your precious life took up so much of your time you never took the time to try to realize what mine is like. I don't even think you care." And while she was saying all these things she could feel her disgust mounting up deep inside. The words stuck in her throat.

It was deathly quiet in their "cozy" kitchen. After a few dreadful seconds they both turned at the sound of a door slowly opening. Little John was wandering in from his bedroom, lugging the yellow supply bag behind him. There were big tears in his eyes too. He looked up at them, first at his daddy, then at his mommy. "Mommy and daddy, will you fix this for John? It's all gone." He held up a nibbled, crumpled leather book cover with all the pages torn from the inside. "It got broked. . . ."

"Not Altogether a Fool"

by Bill Bridget

As it happened, one day in the C-club we were talking over the War, as we often do. . . At times it is almost as if some of us feel we are each in some way responsible for current events and, by rights, are required to drag out whatever is going on in the world, that no event shall be denied its birth-wrought freedom of expression. "The Bomb, after all," remarked one of our cards, "saves men the trouble of going at one-another with stone axes or cold steel."

At this point, I had to join in the conversation. "You might think you're only being sarcastic, but for once you are completely correct: there is nothing more difficult, more dangerous or more of a thrill than facing another man with a knife."

Another person asked jokingly, "Ever done it?"

"Just once," I replied; "though I wish it could have come easier, I've had the practice . . . not that I'd want to give someone another chance."

As I had come into the discussion a bit unexpectedly, I don't suppose anyone had been particularly ready to parry this new tangent. At any rate, they were now all caught up in it, so I had no choice but to give them the story, nothing of jungles and Viet-Cong, but a jungle of sorts. . . .

"I was in bed one night," I began, "in that little apartment I have, down by the Art school, a little after two in the morning, when a burglar came in, up my back stairs; he had probably been out all night, collecting petty-cash.

"He was kind of a scruffy little punk, but he had a mean-looking knife with him, and that made all the difference. I could see it clearly, even in the dim light filtering through the plastic bedroom curtains, and he was clearly determined to use it to full advantage. I was just sitting up when he walked in. He told me to hand over whatever I had, and in a sack on the low bureau next to my bed was a toy I had bought for a rather blood-thirsty cousin of mine, a ten-inch rubber dagger, quite as deadly-looking as his, though it didn't shine. It did have one advantage in looks over my opponent's blade, a streak of gore painted across the tip and down the double-edges; otherwise, in the dim light it was gunmetal black. I got it out in time.

"Striking out with my left foot against the mattress, I jerked my body backwards over the edge of the bed, momentarily out of his

reach, knocking the sack to the floor, rolling and coming up in a crouch with the erst-while toy in my right fist. I saw his eye catch the blood on the dagger's tip. 'You ain't the first bastard,' I growled through fear-clenched teeth, all the while praying to God that he was as panic-stricken by this unexpected turn as was I and would, under the circumstances, turn about and run like hell.

"So I made a drive at him from across the bed, and he dodged backward into the doorsill, and of course I had to give him time to recover while I scrambled over the bed, else he should have guessed I held nothing more than a hard-rubber stage prop. Then he made a cut at me, and I had to dodge, too: I'm not about to tell you that bright, grizzly claw coming at me like a streak of death didn't look as if it had my name on it.

"But dodge I did, and it gave me confidence in that I knew then the collision which interrupted his retreat had come close to disabling this antagonist. I lunged, and he staggered back out of my righting radius, then as I tried to close with him he lunged tenaciously, and I was forced to dodge again. It seemed to me then almost like those ferocious battles at time's beginning, from the days when our ancestors came naked from the caves. That's what hysteria does to a person, completely eliminates perspective and judgment . . . there I was a normally underdeveloped young male American pulling a bluff with a child's toy, stark naked in every sense of the word, opposing a human predator who, doubtlessly, soon would be spreading my insides over the kitchen floor.

"I began to get tired. I was slower, a little heavier on my feet, but still able to keep away from his knife, and still not quite able to figure how I managed to keep out of the way . . . and finally I pulled something that was too smart. I fainted to the right, pulled back, then dove in, figuring him to drop his guard and jump back out of range again and then make for the stairs. My move deceived him, all right, but not as I had intended. I nailed him just under the heart . . . of course, we both thought, momentarily, that I had killed him; then as we recovered from the shock, he said hoarsely, "So, we was bot' bluffin'." Then I realized his knife had been rubber like mine, and all along he had been letting me dodge just as I had attempted to deceive him!

"Then he reached inside his coat and I was abruptly looking down the ugly end of a .38 Police Special. And he said to me, 'Awright, clown, you cain't dodge dis.'

"I fully agreed.

"He walked out of the apartment with all my spare cash, my watch and a couple of rings, and I had to pay a month's rent that week. But what hurt the most was, as I stood there hands-against-the-wall, he, in going out the door, heaved the gun at me and clipped me right above the ear . . . and he was gone before I fully comprehended that it was rubber . . . just like the knives."



